



**National Defence University**

Department of Tactics and Operations Art

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# Visions of Strategy

## Following Clausewitz's Train of Thought

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**National Defence University**

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NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY  
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## Abstract

This dissertation analyses Clausewitz's train of thought on strategy, which includes visualizing and explaining how *Vom Kriege* was written. The work revisits German primary sources and utilizes context to interpret Clausewitz's intellectual development. Theoretically, the work draws upon Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics and theory of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, Kosselck's theory of *Begriffsgeschichte* and Skinner's theory of using context to interpret political thought. Present research and different understandings of Clausewitz and strategy are conceptualized from this theoretical point of view.

It is argued that current way-pointing interpretations, suggesting a great gulf in Clausewitz's ideas due to his observation of politics in 1827, fails to understand his train of thought and way of theorizing strategy. On the contrary, the well-known coining of war as a continuation of *Politik* in 1827 was only analytical fine-tuning, an adjustment, to save his initial constructions and achieve theoretical coherence. The present work suggest that the merit of Clausewitz's work is foremost theoretical, clarifying the problem how to think strategy properly, and by implication revealing the limits of military knowledge.

The present work explains Clausewitz's work in the delicate nexus of moral-political-military thought. His train of thought is instructive to the broader problem of bridging visions and realities in this nexus. Note that Clausewitz refuted war as a solid military thing for strategic thought in the end of his analysis. His way of theorising strategy is imaginative, with a firm practical scope. Read in this way, Clausewitz is a frank vehicle for professional reflection, which also derives a clear theoretical result, possible to contest.

**Keywords:** Clausewitz, military thought, politics, strategy, hermeneutics, centre of gravity

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# CONTENT

<b>1. INTRODUCTION CLAUSEWITZ AND THE PROBLEM OF THINKING STRATEGY PROPERLY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
PROBLEM .....	3
<i>Most important primary sources and citations .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Secondary sources - interpretations .....</i>	<i>10</i>
THESIS - CONTRIBUTIONS .....	12
1. <i>Was there a fundamental turning point in Clausewitz's ideas in 1827? .....</i>	<i>13</i>
2. <i>Was 'the two ways of war' new to Clausewitz in 1827? .....</i>	<i>18</i>
3. <i>What did Clausewitz mean by Politik? .....</i>	<i>22</i>
4. <i>How should we understand the 'wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit'? .....</i>	<i>27</i>
5. <i>How should we in broad terms comprehend Clausewitz and his work? .....</i>	<i>28</i>
6. <i>What was Clausewitz's result? .....</i>	<i>33</i>
OUTLINE OF THE PRESENT WORK .....	35
<b>2. INTERPRETING MILITARY THOUGHT THEORETICAL ASPECTS, METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>39</b>
ONTOLOGY .....	40
INTERFACE TEXT AND CONTEXT.....	44
SITUATION .....	46
INTERFACE TEXT AND READER .....	48
LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE .....	53
PROBLEM-SOLVING AND NOVELTY .....	58
<b>3. SCHARNHORST'S APOSTLE DISCONNECTED VISIONS AND REALITIES.....</b>	<b>61</b>
MILITARY BILDUNG IN BERLIN .....	62
DISCONNECTED POLITICAL VISIONS AND REALITIES.....	73
DISCONNECTED MILITARY VISIONS AND REALITIES .....	83
ON THE ROAD TO JENA AND AUERSTEDT .....	98
<b>4. DER UNTERGANG PATRIOTISM AS POLITIK .....</b>	<b>107</b>
THE GERMAN WAY OF THINKING .....	107
PATRIOTISM AND REFORM .....	117
LECTURER, PROPOUNDING RELEVANT CONCEPTS OF THE <i>KRIEGSKUNST</i> .....	125
<b>5. THE GOOD CAUSE TO WAR FOR FREEDOM, HATRED AND DIGNITY.....</b>	<b>131</b>
SPELLING OUT THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY .....	132
RUSSIA 1812 .....	135
RUSSIAN LIAISON IN PRUSSIA'S HQ, SPRING CAMPAIGN 1813 .....	142
ON THE FLANK WITH THE RUSSO-GERMAN LEGION .....	148
BACK IN BLUE COLOURS TOWARDS WATERLOO .....	154
<b>6. AFTER WATERLOO MILITARY THINKING AND POLITIK IN THE CONTINUATION OF WAR .....</b>	<b>163</b>
TRICKY TRANSITION TO PEACE IN FRANCE .....	164
THE ROUND TABLE IN KOBLENZ .....	167
PRUDENT PLANNING FOR THE WESTERN THEATRE .....	170



POLITICAL REHABILITATION.....	173
<b>7. THE SEEDS DISTILLING THE SYSTEM OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT .....</b>	<b>183</b>
UNCOVERING THE ROOT OF FALSE MILITARY THEORY .....	184
PRACTICAL MOTIVES – COMBATING THE LACK OF REALISM .....	190
THE SMALL VOLUME - FOLLOWING THE <i>URBESTIMMUNG</i> OF WAR .....	197
REFLECTION - <i>NATURPHILOSOPHIE</i> .....	206
<b>8. BERLIN INTRIGUES THE MEN OF 1806 RISE AGAIN .....</b>	<b>209</b>
AMBITIONS IN POLITICAL TURMOIL.....	210
UMTRIEBE .....	218
FRIEDRICH’S STRATEGY .....	223
CRITICIZING THE MEN OF 1806.....	228
<b>9. TRANSMIGRATION TO VOM KRIEGE THE CODIFICATION OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT .....</b>	<b>235</b>
A NEW STANDPOINT ON THE THEORY OF WAR .....	236
THE FIRST <i>GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG</i> – THE <i>URBESTIMMUNG</i> DEPICTED AS A DUEL.....	249
CLARIFYING THE WARLIKE ELEMENT AS THE <i>GEIST</i> OF MODERN STRATEGY .....	259
<b>10. THE COMPOSITION OF COMBAT SEEKING INNER TRUTH BEHIND ART AND APPEARANCE .....</b>	<b>269</b>
SYSTEMATIZING COMBAT TO CLARIFY THE SPHERE OF VICTORY .....	270
THE CONCEPT OF ARMED FORCES AND FIGHTING.....	275
SEARCHER IN POOR HEALTH.....	280
<b>11. THE PROBLEM THE LACK OF REGULARITY IN THE MIDST OF DEFENCE AND ATTACK .....</b>	<b>289</b>
REVIEWING THE PROSPECT OF A COHERENT THEORY FOR THINKING STRATEGY.....	290
RETHINKING DEFENCE BY CLARIFYING LIMITED AIM .....	293
THE DEVICE OF DEFENCE AND ATTACK BETWEEN <i>KULMINATIONSPUNKT</i> AND <i>SCHWERPUNKT</i> .....	298
<b>12. THE TRANSITION PONDERING THE DEVICE IN CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>319</b>
THE <i>NACHRICHT</i> OF 10 JULY 1827.....	320
SKETCHING THE PROSPECT OF ATTACK TOWARDS THE CULMINATION POINT .....	322
THE CONCEPT OF WAR PLAN TOWARDS A REVISED <i>GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG</i> .....	327
<b>13. THE ADJUSTMENT REVISING THE ONTOLOGY AND THE CONCEPT OF THEORY .....</b>	<b>339</b>
RETHINKING THE <i>GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG</i> – WAR IS A FICKLE TRINITY .....	340
RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF THEORY.....	362
THE END OF THE BEGINNING .....	368
<b>14. FINAL THOUGHTS FUSION OF HORIZONS .....</b>	<b>373</b>
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE, STUDY CLAUSEWITZ THROUGH HISTORY AS EFFECT .....	374
TRINITY AND THEORY – CLAUSEWITZ’S IDEAS IN A NUTSHELL .....	379
CLARITY AND REALISM.....	418
<b>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>421</b>

## Figures

FIGURE 1 THE CREATION OF <i>VOM KRIEGE</i> IN BROAD TERMS .....	34
FIGURE 2 CLAUSEWITZ'S RECEPTION ACCORDING TO SUCCESSIVE HORIZONS OF EXPECTATION ABOUT WAR AND WARFARE.....	52
FIGURE 3 KANT'S SCHEMA OF THE SOUL'S HIGHER FACULTIES ( <i>DER OBEREN SEELENVERMÖGEN</i> ) .....	67
FIGURE 4 THE IDEA OF THE DOUBLE WAY OF WAR, 1827.....	331
FIGURE 5 THE CHALLENGE TO THEORIZE THE PRINCIPLE ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN THINKING STRATEGY PROPERLY.....	380
FIGURE 6 THE ANALYTICAL PATH FROM <i>GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG</i> OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT TO REAL STRATEGY IN THE WAR PLAN .....	388
FIGURE 7 THE MODEL OF WARLIKE ENERGY AS A CONTINUATION OF <i>POLITIK</i> .....	404
FIGURE 8 THE FINAL MODEL OF STRATEGY WHEN WAR IS CONSIDERED AS CONTINUATION OF <i>POLITIK</i> . .....	407
FIGURE 9 THE DUALITY OF THE ELEMENT OF <i>POLITIK</i> .....	409



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## CLAUSEWITZ AND THE PROBLEM OF THINKING STRATEGY PROPERLY

### All these attempts can be dismissed!

All these attempts [Bülow, Jomini etc.] to make theory [of strategy] should be considered as progress in the realm of truth only in their analytical part, but in their synthesis, in their doctrines and rules, [they are] completely useless. They strive for fixed magnitudes, while everything in war is indefinite and the calculation [strategic reasoning] must be done purely with variable magnitudes. They consider only material magnitudes, while the whole act of war is crisscrossed by non-physical forces and effects. They only consider the activity of one side, while war is a continuing reciprocity of opposites [*Wechselwirkung der gegenseitigen*].<sup>1</sup>

*Carl v. Clausewitz, around 1827*

In the history of military thought Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz (1780-1831) stands out as the most profound military thinker on the conduct of war and the most widely studied military writer of all time. He entered the Prussian army at the age of twelve, marched six months later to the Rhine Front with Infantry Regiment No 34 *Prinz Ferdinand*. He saw action for the first time against the French Revolutionary Army in the summer of 1793, but complained later that he then never understood 'him' then.<sup>2</sup> He was *der Krieg*, the conception of war for thinking about military activity. However, in the autumn of 1816 when Clausewitz started his work on explaining a proper way to think strategy he had profound experience of war, both in defeat and

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege - Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 19. Edition Jubiläumsausgabe, Hg. Werner Hahlweg (Troisdorf: Dümmler, 1980), 283. All translations are mine if nothing else is stated. I cite the original German text in the footnote for the reader to compare. 'Alle diese Versuche sind verwerflich. Alle diese Theorieversuche sind nur in ihrem analytischen Teil als Fortschritte in dem Gebiet der Wahrheit zu betrachten, in dem synthetischen Teil aber, in ihren Vorschriften und Regeln, ganz unbrauchbar. Sie streben nach bestimmten Größen, während im Kriege alles unbestimmt ist und der Kalkül mit lauter veränderlichen Größen gemacht werden mußte. Sie richten die Betrachtung nur auf materielle Größen, während der ganze kriegserische Akt von geistigen Kräften und Wirkungen durchzogen ist. Sie betrachten nur die einseitige Tätigkeit, während der Krieg eine beständige Wechselwirkung der gegenseitigen ist.'

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Werner Hahlweg, *Clausewitz: Soldat-Politiker-Denker* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1957), 8

victory, up to the inner circles of the Prussian High Command. In addition, his best friend was 'Prussia's Napoleon' Neidhardt von Gneisenau (1755-1831).

Pondering the enormous output about Clausewitz, not least recent, one must ask whether there is anything more to add; but I think there is.<sup>3</sup> A major ambition of his was to contest the formative military thought rooted in the Enlightenment and what he called the '*engineering principle*' of war'. This intellectual pattern projected war mostly as a matter of stiff military design after political decisions, on the understanding that war was a stable and solid thing without interference and subject to moral progress. The quote above catches some of Clausewitz's objections to this way of thinking strategy. His profound effort to come up with something better, a more dynamic way to think strategy, is reflected in a long train of thought – *Gedankengang* - that still deserves our interest; not least because strategic thought still seeks and finds comfort in rigid military designs *a priori* to solve ever-changing strategic problems.

His lifelong wife Marie von Clausewitz (1779-1836) née *Gräfin* von Brühl published the *Hinterlassene Werke* in ten volumes 1832-1837, which reflected one part of his intellectual output. His many other writings were published little by little until 1990 and are mostly available in German. However, contemporary understanding of Clausewitz is rooted in the Cold War reading of the magnum opus *Vom Kriege*, the first three volumes of *Werke*. Or more precisely on the modern English translation *On War* (1976), published by Peter Paret and Michael Howard.<sup>4</sup> This translation brought a more accessible Clausewitz to the English-speaking world, which induced the on-going

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<sup>3</sup> The most recent wave of works are among others: Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, first published as a trilogy 1989-98); Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Das Rätsel Clausewitz Politische Theorie des Krieges im Widerstreit* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2001); Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz* (London: Pimlico, 2002); Michael Howard, *Clausewitz A very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 first 1983); Herfried Münkler, *Über den Krieg – Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegel ihrer theoretischen Reflexion*, 5. Auflage (Birkach: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2008, first 2002); Ulrike Kleemeier, *Grundfragen einer philosophischen Theorie des Krieges: Platon – Hobbes – Clausewitz* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002); Hugh Smith, *On Clausewitz A Study of Military and Political Ideas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004); Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle The Political Theory of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Hew Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War A Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007); *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, Edited by Hew Strachan & Andreas Herberg-Rothe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz A New Approach to On War* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2008); Kai Lütsch, *Jeder Krieg is anders. Jeder Krieg ist gleich. Eine Analyse des Kriegsbegriffs bei Carl von Clausewitz* (Potsdam: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 2009); Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia 1806* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); H.P. Wilmott & Michael B. Barrett, *Clausewitz Reconsidered* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010); *Clausewitz The State and War*, Ed. Andreas Herberg-Rothe, Jan Willem Honig and Daniel Moran (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976; revised 1984), I refer according to the revised edition.

Clausewitz-boom in the study of war and military affairs. However, the translation has also been debated more recently.<sup>5</sup>

The image of the 'modern Clausewitz' has a tendency to project him as a 'guru', either able or unable to answer his readers' concerns. However, strikingly less as a Prussian *Generalmajor* with his own problems to solve, frequently unwell and troubled how to think strategy as a small power squeezed between France, Russia and Austria. Clausewitz's way of writing has invited disparate interpretations, picking bits and pieces easy to integrate into new contexts. For better, for worse, the long history of their reception, the massive reading of his texts by several successive generations, has clearly influenced the way we understand Clausewitz and strategy today.

## PROBLEM

The beginning of my professional interest in Clausewitz was discomfort about how contemporary doctrine schematized campaigns. I regarded in particular the general quest for 'centre of gravity' as apolitical, narrow and one-sided. This concept, borrowed from Clausewitz, was presented with the suggestive undertone of 'strategic silver bullet', as the key to success in every single case, though sometimes hard to find. This way of military thinking tended to stereotype solutions, thus rendering strategic problem-solving alike in planning, in consequence lock-and-box military action. International doctrine is often rooted in American military thought, whence also 'centre of gravity'.<sup>6</sup>

In brief, Clausewitz's notion '*Schwerpunkt*' was interpreted and adopted as 'centre of gravity' in American military thought during the 1980s. The proper meaning and military utility of centre of gravity have been debated since its introduction into doctrine, continually fuelled and puzzled by new experience.<sup>7</sup> The adoption of the

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Michael Howard, 'Foreword Clausewitz's On War: A History of the Howard-Paret Translation', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, v-vii. See also in the same collection Jan Willem Honig, 'Clausewitz's On War: Problems of Text and Translation', 57-73

<sup>6</sup> See my initial study: Anders Palmgren, 'Center of Gravity och Schwerpunkt: Problemet att tänka strategi mellan teori och praktik', *Kungl Krigsvetenskapsakademiens Handlingar och Tidskrift*, No.3 (July-October 2010), 29-42

<sup>7</sup> See for example James J. Schneider & Lawrence L. Izzo, 'Clausewitz's Elusive Center of Gravity', *Military Review* (September 1987), 46-57; Lawrence L. Izzo, 'The Centre of Gravity is Not an Achilles Heel', *Military Review* (January 1988), 72-77; Richard M. Swain, 'Clausewitz, FM 100-5, and the Centre of Gravity', *Military Review* (February 1988), 83; Steven Metz & Fredrick M. Downey, 'Centres of Gravity and Strategic Planning', *Military Review* (April 1988), 23-33; Bruce Gudmundsson, 'Field Stripping the *Schwerpunkt*', *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol 73, No. 12 (December 1989), 30-32; Joe Strange, 'Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So that We All Can Speak the Same Language', *Perspectives on Warfighting*, No. 4, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Quantico: Marine Corps University, 1996); Joseph L. Strange & Richard Iron, 'Center of Gravity What Clausewitz Really Meant', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 35 (2004), 20-27; Milan Vego, 'Center of Gravity', *Military Review* (March-April 2000), 23-29; Gordon M. Wells, *The Center of Gravity Fad: Consequence of the Absence of an Overarching American Theory of War* (Arlington: AUSA Institute of Land Warfare, 2001); Antulio J. Echevarria, *Clausewitz's Center of Gravity: Changing out Warfighting Doctrine – Again!* (Carlisle: SSI USAWC, 2002); Antulio J. Echevarria, 'Clausewitz's Center of Gravity It's not What We have Thought',

concept originated in Harry Summers' *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (1982). That study employed a framework inspired by *On War*, then freshly re-translated.<sup>8</sup> Summers' work was praised for making Vietnam understandable and became mandatory military reading. The poverty of American strategy was partly explained by referring to a novel concept from Clausewitz's elaboration of the war plan concept when the explicit political purpose of war was to overthrow an enemy. Summers cited Clausewitz as:

For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII and Frederick the Great, the centre of gravity was *their army*. If the army had been destroyed, they would all have gone down in history as failures. In countries subject to domestic strife, the centre of gravity is generally the *capital*. In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually *the army of their protector*. Among alliances, it lies in the *community of interest*, and in popular uprisings it is *the personalities of the leaders and public opinion*. It is against these that our energies should be directed...Not by taking things the easy way...but by constantly seeking out the centre of his power, by daring all to win all, will one really defeat the enemy.<sup>9</sup>

American strategy had not focused on any of the possible North Vietnamese centres of gravity literally suggested by Clausewitz (cf. Summers' emphasis in the quote). Four years later the concept was made Army doctrine in the revised Air Land Battle (1986) along with others of today's cherished military concepts such as end-state, manoeuvre and operational design.<sup>10</sup> This doctrine was developed to give operational art prominence to trustworthily confront Soviet superiority in Europe at the time.<sup>11</sup>

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*Naval War College Review*, Vol. LVI, No 1 (Winter 2003), 108-123; Dale Eikmeyer, Center of Gravity Analysis, *Military Review* (July-August 2004), 2-5; Robert Umstead & David R. Denhard, 'Viewing the Center of Gravity through the Prism of Effects-Based Operations', *Military Review* (September-October 2006), 90-95; Milan Vego, 'Clausewitz's Schwerpunkt: Mistranslated from German – Misunderstood in English', *Military Review* (January – February 2007); Rudolph M. Janiczek, *A Concept at the Crossroad Rethinking the Centre of Gravity* (Carlisle: SSI USAWC, 2007); William G. Pierce & Robert C. Coon, 'Understanding the Link between Center of Gravity and Mission Accomplishment', *Military Review* (May-June 2007), 76-84; Mark P. Krieger Jr., 'We the People Are Not the Center of Gravity in an Insurgency', *Military Review* (July-August 2007), 96-100; Peter R Mansoor & Mark S. Ulrich, 'A new COIN Center of Gravity Analysis', *Military Review* (September-October 2007), 21-27; Jan L. Rueschhoff & Jonathan P. Dunne, 'Centers of Gravity from the "Inside Out"', *Joint Forces Quarterly* 60 (1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2011), 120-24

<sup>8</sup> Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, Presido, 1982)

<sup>9</sup> Clausewitz as cited and emphasised in Summers, *On Strategy*, 129. Cf. *Clausewitz, On War*, 8:4, 595-96

<sup>10</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 100-5 Operations* (Washington: 1986), 179-80

<sup>11</sup> For a recent critique of Operational Art see for example Justin Kelly & Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute - U.S. Army War College, September 2009); Justin Kelly & Mike Brennan, 'The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversation of Operational Art', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 56 (First quarter 2010), 109-16; Alexander Mattelaer, *The Crisis in Operational Art*, Conference paper European Security and Defence Forum Workshop 2 organized by Chatham House (11 November 2009) electronically

Every US service introduced in fact their particular interpretation of centre of gravity, clearly influenced by their individual traditions and views of warfare. This peculiarity has also been a source of quarrel in the joint conduct of war.<sup>12</sup> So, a major feature of military thought after the Gulf War of 1991, even outside of the US, has been the preoccupation with finding and striking the 'right' centre of gravity. At a glance, this way thinking surpasses and alienates Clausewitz's original idea of *Schwerpunkt*, as has been partly observed by some other scholars. This particular understanding of contemporary practice underlies the starting point for the present work.

Clausewitz devoted himself to explaining strategy, the art of the general in classical Greece. The term was seemingly lost to European military language for a very long time. The realm of higher military proficiency was meanwhile covered by other terms. The term strategy apparently re-appeared in French in 1771 and some years later in German. It was then understood as the art of commanding an army. To Clausewitz it was the higher realm of *Kriegskunst*, the art of war, in contemporary German.

Strategy was, somewhat simplified, the intellectual activity performed in high command to cover the conceptual interspace between tactics and politics. Even in his youth Clausewitz regarded this aspect of command as sloppily conceptualized. He finally concluded that strategy was best thought of by simply understanding war as a continuation of *Politik* in the broader sense of the German term, thus with a more sophisticated meaning than our contemporary truism suggests.

After Clausewitz, German military thought was preoccupied with the strategic dilemma of being geographically squeezed between the major powers of Europe. The military approach of operational thinking was developed to respond to this particular strategic problem, which on a large scale merged combat and manoeuvre to use time better to compensate for numerical inferiority. In this process Germany became on one hand a leading military power endorsed for military efficiency, and on the other lost two world wars.

The German view of *die Operation*, *operativ* and *operative Führung*, hence operational thinking, was adopted under the term of operational art in Soviet military thought after the First World War, apparently first propounded by Aleksander Svechin, also known for his great interest in Clausewitz.<sup>13</sup> Some have argued that Clausewitz's insights regarding strategy were neglected in German military thought, which

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retrieved from <http://www.chathamhouse.org/research/security/current-projects/european-security-and-defence-forum> 5 December 2012

<sup>12</sup> Dana Priest, 'The Commanders' War', *Washington Post*, (19-21 September 1999). See also for example Jessica Lecroy, *Center of Gravity Schizophrenia Over Kosovo: An "Eccentric" War in Need of a True Clausewitzian Analysis* (Washington D.C.: National War College, 1999); Michael C. Short, 'An Airman's Lessons from Kosovo', in John Andreas Olsen, *From Manoeuvre Warfare to Kosovo* (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy, 2002), 257-88, cf. 260-61

<sup>13</sup> Aleksander A. Svechin, *Strategy*, Edited by Kent D. Lee (Minneapolis: East View, 1992, first in Russian 1923/27). See also his biography: Alexander Swetschin, *Clausewitz – Die klassische Biographie aus Rußland*, Hg. Olaf Rose & Hans Ulrich Seidt (Bonn: Dümmler, 1997, first in Russian 1935),



stereotyped strategic thinking and militarized action.<sup>14</sup> Basically however, German and Russian military thought provided the inspiration for the American adoption of operational art in 1982, which is the primary intellectual framework for today's use of centre of gravity.

In the bitter aftermath of the Great War strategy was re-conceptualized into two distinct parts, Military and Grand, first apparently by J.F.C. Fuller in 1923.<sup>15</sup> One reason was to strengthen long-term preparations for war, observed as crucial in the age of machine warfare and million-man armies. Another reason, firmly argued by Liddell Hart, was to separate the military realm from the political realm. He notoriously blamed Clausewitz for the failure of strategy during the war and started in the late 1920s to argue polemically for the 'Strategy of the Indirect Approach'.<sup>16</sup>

During the Cold War strategy became closely related to nuclear weapons. It was in addition made into an academic study under the name of Strategic Science, closely related to political science. Strategic science has traditionally been concerned with concepts such as deterrence, coercion and limited war.<sup>17</sup> Modern overviews of strategy disclose myriad understandings as the term appears between the military and the political sides of warfare.<sup>18</sup> The conceptual interspace between the tactical and the political is in addition nowadays the subject of several competing ways of thinking, putting emphasis on particular aspects. In addition, the academic interest is massive and diversified as military, moral and political postures intermingle in this field of

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<sup>14</sup> See for example Jehuda Wallach, *Das Dogma der Vernichtungsschlacht: Die Lehren von Clausewitz und Schlieffen und ihre Wirkungen in zwei Weltkriege* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1967); Herbert Rosinski, 'Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought', *Naval War College Review* 29 (1976), 83-103; Ulrich Marwedel, *Carl von Clausewitz: Persönlichkeit und Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes bis 1918* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1978); Werner Hahlweg, 'Das Clausewitzbild Einst und Jetzt' in Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 52-83; Martin Kitchen, 'The Traditions of German Strategic Thought', *The International History Review* I, No. 2, (April 1979), 163-190; *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, Edited by Michael I. Handel (Oxon: Frank Cass, 1986). See a slightly different interpretation in Antulio J. Echevarria II, 'Borrowing from the Master: Uses of Clausewitz in German Military Literature Before the Great War', *War in History* 3 (July 1996), 274-92; *Ibid.*, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001)

<sup>15</sup> See the introduction of Grand Strategy in J.F.C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War* (London: Hutchinson, 1923), 211-28

<sup>16</sup> See development in B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History: A Study of Strategy* (London: Bell, 1929); *Ibid.*, *The Way to Win Wars: The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber, 1942); *Ibid.* *Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition (London: Faber, 1954/67)

<sup>17</sup> See for example Robert Endicott Osgood, *Limited War The Challenge To American Strategy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957); Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); *Ibid.*, *War & Politics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973); Tomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966)

<sup>18</sup> See for example *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Edited by Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, Edited by Williamson Murray et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

thought. Strategy has nowadays been popularised in everyday language, moving far away from its original meaning. Hew Strachan has argued that strategy has lost its meaning in this process.<sup>19</sup>

So, the interspace between the tactical and the political is nowadays subject to a wide variety of rival explanations with different scopes, which does not always contribute to intellectual clarity. The present work will revisit strategy in the Clausewitzian sense, because his effort to clarify the perpetual problem of thinking strategy properly has still merits to understand fundamentals, principle problems and theoretical prerequisites.

Past military thinking is addressed in this work by the loose term military thought in a similar manner as political thought covers the study of politics. Anyone approaching Clausewitz, as any great intellectual work related to evolving practical matters, needs to make theoretical choices. I have chosen a historical approach, focusing on Clausewitz and his intellectual development. This means how he perceived matters related to his own condition, rather than the proper meaning we relate to our contemporary conditions.

Regarding theory, I have been inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's explanation of philosophical hermeneutics and the theory of *Wirkungsgeschichte* to form a basic ontological platform.<sup>20</sup> Reinhart Koselleck's approach of *Begriffsgeschichte* has been of merit in the study of conceptual development and historical understandings of military thought.<sup>21</sup> I have also benefitted from Quentin Skinner's way of historically studying political thought in context, which likewise sufficiently meets the challenge of studying evolving military thought.<sup>22</sup>

Military thought is somewhat empty if not put in relation to the actual problem that puzzled the thinker. In the study of political and moral thought the structuring discourse of military thought is important for understanding arguments and ideas put forward. At a glance military language appears as a quite stable continuum of core concepts; however words may be alike but meaning differs, which the rough summary above of the terms centre of gravity and strategy clearly indicates. Military thought and consequently also military language are always in flux to comprehend and debate new problems from an understanding that is both historical and anticipatory.

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<sup>19</sup> Hew Strachan, 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy', *Survival*, 47:3 (2007), 33-54. See also Ibid. 'The politicians and the generals', *Oxford Today*, Vol 19 No 3 (2007). [Online version]; URL: <https://www.oxfordtoday.ox.ac.uk/page.aspx?pid=1170> accessed 26 November 2012

<sup>20</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Ed., Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004). I also use Hans-Georg Gadamer *Hermeneutik I Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990)

<sup>21</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989); Ibid., *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Ibid., *Begriffsgeschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006)

<sup>22</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol 1. Regarding Method (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Wittgenstein pointed out the need to comprehend concepts and ideas from their contemporary relations. Thus if we for example want to understand the nuances in Clausewitz's notion of *Schwerpunkt* we need to understand his broader web of ideas, especially on strategy, that he embraced when expressing the notion. This work approaches Clausewitz's military thought simply as texts, as pieces appearing at a particular time and nesting in a context that can be exploited as references.

This work undertakes the problem of reconstructing Clausewitz's long train of thought – *Gedankengang* - on strategy. This involves visualizing a suggestion of how *Vom Kriege* was created. I return to the available texts in German because this is necessary to sufficiently grasp the increasing sophistication of his thinking, his irony and his expressive language. The work has convinced me even more that translation is also interpretation nested in a situation. A chronological reading of Clausewitz's texts in German interwoven with his experience and readings in temporal context fill a gap in the present state of research, dominated as it is by the Howard & Paret translation of *On War*.

#### MOST IMPORTANT PRIMARY SOURCES AND CITATIONS

1. The latest edition of *Vom Kriege* (1980) edited by Werner Hahlweg.<sup>23</sup> The essays and introductions included are still valuable, even if they appear slightly old today. Cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', *Vom Kriege*. Book: Chapter, page.
2. The first publication of *Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz über Krieg und Kriegführung* published in 10 volumes (1832-1837) has been used as retrieved electronic copies (pdf. scan of original text) downloaded from the French National Library. Cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', *Werke* Vol x/10, page.<sup>24</sup>
3. Hahlweg's collection of Clausewitz's drafts, essays, studies and letters published in two volumes 1966-1990. Hahlweg's introductions and notes to the texts are very valuable. The present work tries to develop Hahlweg's sometimes very broad dating of single texts, especially regarding Clausewitz's drafts for *Vom Kriege*. Cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', *Schriften* (1966/90), page.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege - Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 19. Edition Jubiläumsausgabe, Hg. Werner Hahlweg (Troisdorf: Dümmler, 1980)

<sup>24</sup> *Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz über Krieg und Kriegführung*, 10 Vols (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1832-37). I have used electronic copies available in pdf from *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/Search?ArianeWireIndex=index&p=1&lang=EN&q=clausewitz> (retrieved 6 June 2009)

<sup>25</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Schriften – Aufsätze – Studien – Briefe*, Dokumente aus dem Clausewitz- Scharnhorst- und Gneisenau-Nachlaß sowie aus öffentlichen und privaten Sammlungen, Published by Werner Hahlweg, 2 Vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966/1990)

4. Hahlweg's collection of Clausewitz's scattered texts published in 1979 includes texts published previously. Cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', *Schriften* (1979), page.<sup>26</sup>
5. Hans Rothfehls' collection of Clausewitz's political texts and notes published in 1922. He wanted at the end of the First World War to make a point about Clausewitz as a political thinker. Rothfehl's own work *Krieg und Politik* (1920) also included some of Clausewitz's notes. The collection is cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', *Schriften* (1922), page.<sup>27</sup>
6. The first biography of Clausewitz published by Karl Schwartz in 1878 includes several letters and texts, some of which are not available elsewhere. Cited as: Clausewitz [estimated time of writing], 'Title of individual text', Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz* Vol x/2, page.<sup>28</sup>
7. The collection *Geist und Tat* (1941) edited by Walter Malmsten Schering includes a few texts not available elsewhere. His editing has some traces of the NS era. It seems likely that some of the titles used for the short fragments are his own.<sup>29</sup>
8. The correspondence between Clausewitz and his wife Marie was published by Karl Linnebach during the First World War. It remains the most important source about their private life between 1803 and 1831. However, there is a gap in their correspondence from 1816 to 1830 when they lived together. Cited as: Clausewitz to Marie, Place, date, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, page.<sup>30</sup>
9. The correspondence between Clausewitz and Gneisenau was published by Hahlweg in *Schriften* (1990). The correspondence, partly shortened, was first published in the biography of Gneisenau by Pertz & Delbrück (1864-1880). This work also includes Gneisenau's correspondence with Marie and other interesting people valuable to this work.<sup>31</sup> This correspondence remains the most important primary source about Clausewitz's personal life and views from 1816 to 1830. Cited as: Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Place, date, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol x/5, page
10. Scharnhorst's extensive writings and correspondence have been published little by little. He was Clausewitz's mentor and intellectual inspiration, thus highly important to the present work. I have relied foremost on Ursula von Gersdorff's

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<sup>26</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Verstreute kleine Schriften*, Zusammenstellt, bearbeitet und eingeleitet von Werner Hahlweg (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979)

<sup>27</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Politische Schriften und Briefe*, Published by Hans Rothfehls (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922). See also Hans Rothfehls, *Carl von Clausewitz Politik und Krieg – Eine ideengeschichtliche Studie*, reprint, Nachwort. Joachim Niemeyer (Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers, 1980, first 1920), 197-229

<sup>28</sup> Karl Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz und der Frau Marie von Clausewitz*, 2 vols (Berlin: Dümmler, 1878)

<sup>29</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Geist und Tat: Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers*. Edited by Walter Malmsten Schering (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1941)

<sup>30</sup> *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz. Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, Edited by Karl Linnebach (Berlin: Wared, 1916)

<sup>31</sup> Georg Heinrich Pertz & Hans Delbrück, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau*, 5 vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1864-80)

collection *Ausgewählte Schriften* (1983) and the new extensive collection *Private und Dienstliche Schriften* 6 vols (2002-2012) published by Johannes Kunisch et al.<sup>32</sup> Important also are essays published in *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin* (1802-1804), the organ for the Military Society in Berlin headed by Scharnhorst.<sup>33</sup>

The electronic publications of older literature available from sites such as *Google Books* and *Archive.org* have been of great help. From these it has been possible to easily access proper editions of literature (scanned pdf) from Clausewitz's time, relevant to this work. Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* was scattered during World War II. Hahlweg's collection includes information about where some original manuscripts are kept. I have not looked further at these, finding the reprinted texts listed above sufficient for my purposes. Hahlweg also gave a list of contents in Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* from 1889. A comparison indicates that not all the texts preserved at this time have been published.<sup>34</sup> It has, however, been beyond the purpose of this work to look further in archives for these few texts.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES - INTERPRETATIONS

The extent of secondary sources related to Clausewitz is almost beyond comprehension. Hahlweg included valuable overviews in *Vom Kriege* and *Schriften* (1966/90). The best modern updated overview of writings about Clausewitz is published digitally on the 'Clausewitz.com' home page edited by Christopher Bassford.<sup>35</sup> He has suggested four categories of writing about Clausewitz, which give a useful framework for interpretation:<sup>36</sup>

1. *The original intent school*, mostly historians narrowly focused on Clausewitz in his particular time and context.
2. *The inspirationist school*, Bassford exemplifies with present-minded political scientists, students of strategic affairs and business theorists. This also means that military students 'borrowing from the master' belong to this category. These kinds of student are interested in freely adopting concepts elaborated by Clausewitz to apply to present matters.

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<sup>32</sup> Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Hg. Ursula von Gersdorff (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1983); Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Veröffentlichungen aus den Archiven Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Bd. 52,2, Hg. Johannes Kunisch - Michael Sikora - Tilman Stive, 6 Vols (Köln: Böhlau, 2002-12)

<sup>33</sup> *Militärische Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin* (Berlin: Wegener, 1802-1805)

<sup>34</sup> The list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* 1889 is printed in *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74.

<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.clausewitz.com>

<sup>36</sup> Summarized from Christopher Bassford, 'The Primacy of Policy and the Trinity in Clausewitz's Mature Thought', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, Ed. Strachan & Herberg-Rothe, 74-90, cf. 75-76

3. *The receptionist school*, mainly historians interested in how Clausewitz's ideas have influenced inspirationists over time.
4. *The editorial school*, consist of people who think they have clear ideas of what Clausewitz's 'really meant' and how he intended to revise his work.

Most accounts can be referred to several categories in one way or another. In any case, one needs to observe this peculiarity when using secondary sources. Every category adds important perspectives, but one needs to be aware of what they are arguing: is it about war in general, or is it about Clausewitz's view, or is the interpretation derived from another secondary source etc.? The present work started by trying to build a starting point from authoritative accounts, but found this approach insufficient and disparate, unsuited to coming up with a fresh perspective. I have therefore chiefly worked through the primary sources according to the problem of reconstructing Clausewitz's train of thought.

Hahlweg's introductions and comments in *Vom Kriege* and *Schriften* have been important basic interpretations, especially regarding individual texts. He has also written several articles of continued interest.<sup>37</sup> Basically, Eberhard Kessel's interpretations of Clausewitz's way of writing *Vom Kriege* remain very important, not least because of his extensive influence on later basic works.<sup>38</sup> The present work tries to improve Hahlweg's and Kessel's basic interpretations. Peter Paret's biography *Clausewitz and the State* (1976/2007) has provided valuable interpretations about Clausewitz's life and time, thus as an exponent of Bassford's first category.<sup>39</sup> However, I have worked chiefly through the primary sources and used them differently from Paret to support my line of interpretation. Several of his other works have also been informative.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See among others Werner Hahlweg, 'Clausewitz und die preußische Heersreform', *Zeitschrift für Heerskunde*, Bd. 11 Heft 163 (1959), 27-33; *ibid.* 'Clausewitz und die Französische Revolution. Die methodische Grundlage des Werks Vom Kriege', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol 27/3 (1975), 240-51; *Ibid.*, 'Militärwesen und Philosophie. Zur Genesis der methodischen Grundlagen des Werkes Vom Kriege', *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, Heft 5 (1976), 395-97; *Ibid.* 'Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz', in Ulrich de Maizière (Hrsg), *Freiheit ohne Krieg. Beiträge zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorie von Carl von Clausewitz*, (Bonn: Dümmlers, 1980), 325-32; *Ibid.*, 'Philosophie und Militärtheorie im Denken und in den Aufzeichnungen des Generals von Clausewitz', *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 26 (1988), 31-35

<sup>38</sup> Eberhard Kessel, 'Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, Heft 9 (Darmstadt: Mittler, 1953), 405-23; *ibid.* Die doppelte Art des Krieges', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* (Darmstadt: Mittler, 1954), 298-310

<sup>39</sup> Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State – The Man, His Theories and His Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, first 1976)

<sup>40</sup> See among other Peter Paret, 'Clausewitz: A Bibliographical Survey', *World Politics*, Vol XVII, No. 2 January, (1965); 272-85; *Ibid.*, *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); *Ibid.*, 'From Ideal to Ambiguity: Johannes von Muller, Clausewitz, and the People in Arms.' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol 65, No. 1, (January 2004), 101-11

In conclusion, I mention Raymond Aron's influential work *Penser la Guerre: Clausewitz* (1976), which can be referred to the inspirationist and editorial schools.<sup>41</sup> Aron's work is interesting; while his influence on other thinkers has been most important to me. I do not share his editorial approach, strikingly caught by his comparison of reading Clausewitz with reading a 'detective story that lacks the final chapter and leaves the denouement of the case to the reader'.<sup>42</sup> The questioning of Clausewitz's contemporary relevance by the 'New War' discourse, represented by scholars such as Martin van Creveld, John Keegan and Mary Kaldor, emanates from the image of the 'modern Clausewitz'.<sup>43</sup> Basically, this involves reading the Paret & Howard translation of *On War* in conjunction with the interpretations by Paret emphasizing the state plus Aron's schemata projecting Clausewitz's development of political primacy. The standpoint that war is the continuation of *policy* was powerfully argued by Cold War scholars as the 'Clausewitz dictum'.

Consequently, the latest wave of Clausewitz interpretations has appeared as reactions to the tension between the image of the 'modern Clausewitz' and the 'New War' criticism of the 'modern Clausewitz'. The most important works and collections were listed at the very beginning of this chapter.<sup>44</sup> Some steps have been taken in these accounts to improve our understanding of Clausewitz. But, still there exists ambivalence about his points and their relevance. It is clear that the 'modern Clausewitz' still rules and constitutes the norm. In short, this is the point and state of research that have inspired me to return to Clausewitz's texts in German, to retrace his train of thought and efforts to develop ultimately a proper form of thinking strategy.

## THESIS - CONTRIBUTIONS

The *thesis* of the present work is that the interpretative image of the 'modern Clausewitz' leads astray and needs to be modified. Therefore, the *aim* of this study is

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<sup>41</sup> Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre: Clausewitz*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimand, 1976); *ibid.* *Clausewitz - Den Krieg denken* (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1980); *Ibid.* *Clausewitz Philosopher of War*, Translated by Christine Broker and Norman Stone (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). I have used the German translation since the English is abridged and poor. For Aron's work see Murielle Cozette, 'Reading Clausewitz: Raymond Aron's Interpretation of On War', *Clausewitz The State and War*, Ed. Herberg-Rothe et.al, 109-28

<sup>42</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz - Den Krieg denken*, 17-19

<sup>43</sup> Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); *ibid.*, 'What is Wrong with Clausewitz?', *The Clausewitzian Dictum and the Future of Western Military Strategy*, Ed. Gert de Nooy (Hauge: Kluwer, 1997), 7-24; John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 2004 first 1993); Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); *ibid.*, 'Elaborating the New War Thesis', *Rethinking the Nature of War*, Ed. Isabelle Duyvesteyn & Jan Angstrom (London: Cass, 2005); *ibid.*, 'Inconclusive Wars: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant in these Global Times?', *Global Policy*, 1:3 (2010), 271-81

<sup>44</sup> For good and interesting summaries of different modern positions in interpretations of Clausewitz see for example: Hew Strachan, 'Clausewitz and the Dialectics of War', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-first Century*, 14-44; Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War*; Daniel Moran, 'Late Clausewitz', *Clausewitz The State and War*, 87-107, cf. 87-89; Bart Schurmann, 'Clausewitz and the "New Wars" Scholars', *Parameters* (Spring 2010), 89-100; Bruno Colson, 'Clausewitz for Every War', *War in History*, Vol 18:2 (2011), 249-61

to reconstruct Clausewitz's train of thought on strategy by revisiting the German sources. The work suggests a chronological reading of his texts interwoven in contemporary context. The approach fills a gap in the present state of research, as no detailed outline of this kind exists, as far as I know. By implication, this reconstruction illuminates aspects of military thought worth contemplating, not least to reflect on military thinking itself.

Clausewitz lived in a time of great change, politically and morally. This had profound military implications. Therefore his experience in combination with an expressive pen offers many apt reflections valuable to the student of strategy. This approach displays the best of military thinking, not just as pure abstractions, but also as flesh and blood that underlies the clever word.

The *purpose* is to revisit Clausewitz's notion of strategy, thus without contemporary prefix: neither as grand nor as military. This means straightforward military thinking performed in the interspace between tactics and politics. Ultimately, his work tells us that military thinking in this conceptual interspace cannot trust straight military logic. Military principles are not generally applicable; instead he offers the embryo of a dynamic model interweaving war and *Politik* in a broad sense. This serious insight deserves recurring attention.

Clausewitz has often been either unjustifiably mystified or simplified. Some have dug deep to pronounce his roots in German philosophy, discussing his affinity with Hegel, Kant etc. Some have picked single concepts, such as '*Vernichtung*' or 'political primacy' to decode his texts. Some have read his work as a normative account or as a handbook. Some see *Vom Kriege* as metaphysics, thus as historical nonsense or military romanticism, short on scientific, technological and social progress, consequently of no interest for proper modern military thought and education. Some on the other hand approach his texts literally; as a religious person might read sacred texts. Any extreme tends to appear ill-informed and naive. Clausewitz was a practical officer at heart, but a keen observer of dynamics with the gift, or peculiarity, of easily thinking in striking abstractions.

The present work is written with the student of strategy in mind. This is simply because Clausewitz's alien practical deeds and evolving theoretical constructions still have much to tell about the perennial problem of thinking strategy properly. Six questions will now be outlined as motor for the present work and to settle a perspective in relation to the interpretative image of the 'modern Clausewitz' in contemporary research.

#### 1. WAS THERE A FUNDAMENTAL TURNING POINT IN CLAUSEWITZ'S IDEAS IN 1827?

The most powerful line of interpretation has step-by-step suggested the existence of a great gulf in Clausewitz's ideas - a rupture. The year 1827 has been projected as a fundamental turning point when Clausewitz finally articulated political primacy over the conduct of war and radically changed his theoretical outlook. This insight is said to derive from his historical studies in the mid-1820s and most famously ratified in a note from the summer of that year.



This note, the 'Nachricht of 10 July', emphasized the need to further consider: '*daß der Krieg nichts ist als die fortgesetzte Staatspolitik mit anderen Mitteln*': war is nothing but the continuation of state policy with other means.<sup>45</sup> The interpretation of an intellectual turning point originates apparently from Hans Delbrück, the German historian engaged in a drawn-out pen fight with the Wilhelmine General Staff over strategy and the role of battle, termed the *Strategiestreit* 1879-1920.<sup>46</sup>

In the bitter aftermath of the Great War there arose a debate among German scholars about the meaning of Clausewitz's treatise, the way it was written and the meaning of strategy. These studies mostly referred to Delbrück and the *Strategiestreit* of for example Otto Hinze, Hans Rothfels, Eberhard Kessel, Karl Linnebach, Walter Else and Walter Malmsten Schering. Note that Herbert Rosinski tried in the mid-1930s to clarify Clausewitz's ideas in the light of the several prefaces and notes included in *Vom Kriege*. Rosinski interpreted an 'undated note' as written at the epic moment when Clausewitz closed his manuscript box for a new assignment in Breslau in 1830.<sup>47</sup>

In the undated note Clausewitz designated Chapter one of Book 1 as the only text he was really satisfied with. Consequently, with this interpretation this chapter became Clausewitz's final word. Kessel immediately contested several of Rosinski's interpretations, but not the framing of the undated note. After the war Kessel continued this line of interpretation. The seminal article *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre* (1953) suggested how and when Clausewitz had written his major texts,

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<sup>45</sup> Clausewitz, 'Nachricht 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81

<sup>46</sup> See for example Hans Delbrück, 'Clausewitz', *Zeitschrift für Preussische Geschichte und Landeskunde*, JG.15. (Berlin: Mittler, 1878), 217-231; *Ibid.*, *Die Strategie des Perikles erläutert durch die Strategie Friedrichs des Großen*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1890), 2-4; *ibid.* *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen politischen Geschichte* Vol 4/4 (Berlin: Stilke, 1920), 530. About the pen-fight see Sven Lange, *Hans Delbrück und der 'Straegiestreit'. Kriegführung und Kriegsgeschichte in der Kontroverse 1879-1914* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1995); Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 183-88; Robert T. Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun: Erich von Falkenhayn and the development of Attrition, 1870-1916* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38-55

<sup>47</sup> Otto Hinze, 'Delbrück, Clausewitz und die Strategie Friedrichs des Großen', *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte*, 33 (1920), 131-77; Hans Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz Politik und Krieg – Eine ideengeschichtliche Studie*, Nachwort. Joachim Niemeyer (Berlin: Dümmler, 1980, first 1920); Eberhard Kessel, 'Doppelpolige Strategie', *Wissen und Wehr*, JG. 12 (Berlin: Mittler, 1931), 624-31; Karl Linnebach, 'Die wissenschaftliche Methode in Clausewitz Werk Vom Kriege', *Wissen und Wehr*, JG: 14 (Berlin: Mittler, 1933), 477-501; Walter Else, *Clausewitz* (Berlin: Junker, 1934); Karl Linnebach, 'Zum Meinungsstreit über den Vernichtungsgedanken in der Kriegführung', *Wissen und Wehr*, JG: 15 (Berlin: Mittler, 1934), 726-51; Herbert Rosinski, 'Entwicklung von Clausewitz Werk Vom Kriege im Lichte Seiner Vorreden und Nachrichten', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol 151 (1935), 278-93 cf.285; Walter Malmsten Schering, *Die Kriegsphilosophie von Clausewitz: Eine Untersuchung über ihren systematischen Aufbau* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935); Walter Malmsten Schering, 'Clausewitz Lehre von Zweck und Mittel', *Wissen und Wehr*, JG: 17 (Berlin: Mittler, 1936), 606-31; Walter Malmsten-Schering, *Wehrphilosophie* (Leipzig: Barth, 1939); Gerhard Ritter, 'Die Lehre Carls von Clausewitz vom politischen Sinn des Krieges', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol 167, Heft 2 (1943), 41-65

and this remains in many respects the commonly accepted view.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the interpretation of the undated note as written in 1830 was ratified, more or less, in the Paret and Howard translation of *On War* (1976).<sup>49</sup>

Time and text walked hand-in-hand in the Cold War milieu as the role of *Politik* in war was observed, mostly positively interpreted by scholars similarly as political reason. The massive and highly influential interpretation, *Penser la Guerre: Clausewitz* (1976) by the French philosopher and political scientist Raymond Aron put forward the first chapter of *Vom Kriege* with the powerful allusion 'Clausewitz's testament'.<sup>50</sup>

Aron followed his friend Rosinski about the undated note. Consequently, he pinpointed the device of the 'Trinity' in the end of the first chapter as Clausewitz's legacy, hence testament. Aron wanted to make a point about political primacy over military command from Clausewitz's work, obviously with the world wars and the danger of a nuclear exchange in mind.<sup>51</sup> Roughly, in that way the first chapter of *Vom Kriege* appeared as a seminal text with precedence over all other Clausewitz texts, literally as well as figuratively.

Azar Gat severely criticized Aron's interpretation (1989/2001), but emphasized 1827 even more as a fundamental turning point and projected discontinuity in Clausewitz's ideas. The perceived turning point, before and after the great insight, was essential for Gat's interpretation, which will be developed more thoroughly in the next part.<sup>52</sup> Beatrice Heuser (2002) continued from Gat and makes Clausewitz into a 'Janus', the god of beginnings and transitions in Roman mythology. She suggested that we should perceive 'two Clausewitzes', the young 'idealist' and the mature 'realist', to understand his texts. These different set of texts had historically attracted different readers. For Heuser Clausewitz had realised the role of politics in 1827 and had therefore radically changed his mind.

To sum up: basically, Clausewitz analysed only the Napoleonic wars in his earlier theoretical writing. Here Clausewitz analysed and described only 'absolute' war, war set free from any political constraints. In all these texts dating from before 1827 political considerations are eclipsed, never appearing to have a direct effect, never appearing to have a direct influence on the conduct of war. And yet... it was the endless repetition

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<sup>48</sup> Eberhard Kessel, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Clausewitz Werk Vom Kriege', *Historische Zeitschrift* 152 (1935), 97-100, cf. 98; Ibid, 'Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, Heft 9. (1953), 405-23, cf. 412.

<sup>49</sup> See Clausewitz, 'Unfinished Note, Presumably written in 1830', *On War*, 70-71

<sup>50</sup> Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre: Clausewitz*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); *ibid.* *Clausewitz - Den Krieg denken* (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1980); *Ibid.*, *Clausewitz Philosopher of War*, Translated by Christine Broker and Norman Stone (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). I have used the German translation since the English is abridged and poorly translated. About Aron's work see Murielle Cozette, 'Reading Clausewitz: Raymond Aron's Interpretation of On War', *Clausewitz The State and War*, Ed. Herberg-Rothe et al., 109-28

<sup>51</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz - Den Krieg denken*, 18, 154-69, See also Herberg-Rothe, *Das Rätsel Clausewitz*, 149-76

<sup>52</sup> Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 158- 265

in these texts of the need for the main battle and the annihilation of the enemy's forces that would appeal to military thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries... Delbruck had understood that Clausewitz had been in the process of revising *On War* when he died. Kessel pinpointed how in 1827, after twelve years of post-Napoleonic peace, Clausewitz came to the conclusion that his analysis to date was too exclusively that of 'absolute' war to be applicable to all war.<sup>53</sup>

Heuser continues: 'Clausewitz realised that he had to rewrite all earlier parts of *On War*. War was a function of politics, and almost everything he had said so far had left out this key variable.'<sup>54</sup> Consequently, she confirmed that Clausewitz was ultimately satisfied only with the first chapter of Book 1. Heuser's framing catches fairly well the common view that appeared from the Cold War reading: he had been blind to the role of politics in war until 1827, but matured intellectually due to increasing historical awareness. He embraced politics to make his theory reflect *all* wars.

Hugh Smith's *On Clausewitz* (2004) expanded the 'testament' allusion by suggesting that *On War* included both a 'militant Old Testament' and a 'more measured New Testament'. However, according to Smith they were interwoven rather than conveniently divided.<sup>55</sup> Antulio Echevarria argued likewise that the 'Old Testament' (Books 2-6) was not less worthy than the 'New Testament' (Books 7-8, 1). The later texts took no precedence over the earlier.<sup>56</sup> Eberhard Kessel observed as early as in 1937 that a large part of Clausewitz's core ideas were in place as early as 1804, which indicated continuity rather than rupture in Clausewitz's intellectual development.<sup>57</sup>

Peter Paret shared this view, interpreting likewise continuity in Clausewitz's ideas, for which he has been criticized. Paret responded in *The Cognitive Challenge of War* (2009), maintaining the view of continuity.<sup>58</sup> This narrative of the most powerful line of interpretation has projected the year 1827 as a turning point for Clausewitz towards 'the good'. Its significance has differed but all major scholars have been influenced by the suggestive attraction of 1827 with its unjustifiably naive and distorted image of Clausewitz.

Now to the argument of the present work: this line of interpretation gives the unjustified impression of Clausewitz as a rather naive idealist before his 'great insight', which turned him into a modern (proper) realist. The adjustments around 1827 constituted intellectually fine-tuned problem-solving related to the invention and explication of his 'device of attack and defence'. Note that Clausewitz investigated the doctrine of the warlike element. He regarded the political element as theoretically

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<sup>53</sup> Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 29-30

<sup>54</sup> Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 32

<sup>55</sup> Smith, *On Clausewitz A Study of Military and Political Ideas*, 65

<sup>56</sup> Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 4-5

<sup>57</sup> Eberhard Kessel, 'Einleitung', in Carl von Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804 mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809*, Hg. Eberhard Kessel (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937), 27

<sup>58</sup> Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*, 154

outside the scope of enquiry up to this point. However, the basic political side of the conduct of war was indeed clear to Clausewitz from his very first writings. It was rooted in Machiavelli, as well as in the military and moral discourse emanating from the Enlightenment and not least in Scharnhorst's teachings.

The very close relation of political governing and military high command was of course self-evident in practice. Clausewitz experienced this relation frequently during his career, however often in very poor condition due to different interests and views causing immense friction. He continually perceived disconnected visions of politics, policies and political realities as foundations for proper strategic thinking. However, from his theoretical point of view, the political purpose of war was given to the commander, who in this sense was only advisor to the monarch and the politicians in power.

Consequently, the political was placed outside his enquiry of the warlike element in the early stages of *Vom Kriege*. Clausewitz investigated strategy according to the *Kriegskunst*, thus with reference to the command of an army. He wanted to explain how commanders should aim campaigns to keep military means and political purpose in balance. It is plausible that he initially placed the element of *Politik* outside the theoretical core for the same reasons as did his lifelong intellectual antagonist A.D.H. Bülow. This influential military thinker had argued in Clausewitz's youth that *Politik* was too much in flux to construct stable military theory from. When Clausewitz fully theoretically incorporated *Politik* he had a sophisticated theoretical meaning in mind. I will develop this shortly.

The subordination of military command to political authorities was self-evident and not an issue for Clausewitz. Note that he observed that Metternich regarded the Prussian Military High Command headed by Blücher and Gneisenau as not fully politically reliable in the campaigns of 1813-1815. Their strategic thinking was too independent, to which of course Clausewitz contributed as a member of the inner military circle and closest friend of 'Prussia's Napoleon'. According to Clausewitz the Austrian Foreign Minister regarded the Prussian Army as 'a state within the state' shielding 'revolutionary tendencies'.

For Clausewitz the problem was rather the opposite. Leading voices in the Allied High Command could not think strategy properly, fuelled as they were by continual international friction. More important was the never-ending internal friction between the king, the government, the political bureaucrats and the military high command in Prussia. This internal rivalry and lack of joint political and military perspective was probably a major reason for him to write *Vom Kriege*. To see strategic problems right was strikingly labelled the 'greatest friction of all' in Book 1. Ultimately, Clausewitz had the ambition to propound a jointly-accepted intellectual platform and viewpoint from which Prussia was to think and make strategy.

In conclusion, the interpretation of a great gulf in Clausewitz's ideas, a rupture justifying the 'modern Clausewitz', leads astray from his train of thought and major points. The adjustment in 1827 was about theoretical problem-solving to create coherence. On the contrary, the element of *Politik* saved the doctrine of the warlike element as a relevant construction. Clausewitz used actually the element of *Politik* to

modify the ontology of the warlike element. The present work will demonstrate this analytical path. For an overview of Clausewitz's analytical structure see figure 6 in chapter 14.

## 2. WAS 'THE TWO WAYS OF WAR' NEW TO CLAUSEWITZ IN 1827?

A related aspect of research has concerned Clausewitz's presentation in 1827 of '*die doppelte Art des Krieges*', i.e. the two ways, or kinds, of war.<sup>59</sup> Delbrück was the first to make extensive use of this device. He elucidated two basic historical categories of strategy – '*Niederwerfungsstrategie*' (overthrow) and '*Ermattungsstrategie*' (wearing down, attrition). This interpretation was used as a counter-argument to the one-sided battle-centric understanding of strategy in the Wilhelmine General Staff during the *Strategiestreit*.<sup>60</sup>

Kessel published a piece about the 'two kinds of war' in 1954, seeking to sort out Clausewitz's later thinking and terminology. He argued, loosely, that for Clausewitz the conduct of war was always about weakening the enemy as much as possible regardless of political purpose. The claim was supported by referring to a note written at the end of his higher military training in Berlin in 1804. Kessel also added with no direct details that Clausewitz had changed his mind.<sup>61</sup> Gat vastly expanded Kessel's argument into a foundation for his own interpretation. He elaborated Clausewitz's understanding of 'The Nature of War' as based on: 'Military Decisiveness and Political Greatness: The Napoleonic Model'. Gat projected Clausewitz's famous late attention to politics as a result of a 'crisis' derived from this outlook, as an unawareness of political moderation of military efforts prior to 1827.

It is therefore misleading to assume that in 1804 Clausewitz had already been aware of the range of political aims and objectives and that in 1827 he simply elaborated on it or become fully aware of its implications for the conduct of war. There was a perfect harmony in 1804 between Clausewitz's political and military convictions; both were formulated in radical terms. Total concentration of force, the imperative of fighting for decision – these were Clausewitz's conceptions of the nature of war within the context of his general political outlook which called for determined action and great objectives.<sup>62</sup>

The present work argues that political direction of military efforts was clear to Clausewitz during his entire career. He complained for example in the notes of 1804 that military literature often neglected the impact of the political purpose in elaborating the conduct of war. However, Clausewitz was very concerned about the disconnection of visions and realities militarily as well as politically in old Prussia. In more detail, the 'double way of war' was distilled as a theoretical embryo already in

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<sup>59</sup> Clausewitz, '*Nachricht 10 July 1827*', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81

<sup>60</sup> Delbrück, *Die Strategie des Perikles erläutert durch die Strategie Friedrichs des Großen*, cf. 1-29

<sup>61</sup> Eberhard Kessel, '*Die doppelte Art des Krieges*', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* (Darmstadt: Mittler, 1954), 298-310, cf. 299

<sup>62</sup> Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 207

Koblenz in 1816-1818 as explained in chapter 7. Gat overlooks practice, simplifies and stereotypes Clausewitz theoretically to the extent that he appears unjustifiably naive. The realities were more complex.

First, Clausewitz defined the idea of combat as a theoretical constitutive element of tactics and strategy as early as in 1804. This standpoint was a counter-argument to predominant views in military discourse rooted in the Enlightenment, which sought success outside the verdict of battle in different forms of generic claim. In short, Clausewitz perceived disconnected visions and realities politically as well as militarily, crudely confirmed by the disasters at Jena and Auerstedt in October 1806. The perceived disconnection, the inability to decide and wage war according to necessary political and military conditions, influenced his thinking for the rest of his life.

Bonaparte ruled a country of 40 million, eight times that of Prussia. Due to the might of France the Emperor consistently employed a military method that aimed to achieve one initial decision in battle, to be exploited for further battles until the enemy was politically prostrate. That was 'Bonaparte's method', his peculiarity as 'the most foolhardy player of all time', which elevated him to be ruler of Europe in Clausewitz's later interpretation. It is simply misleading to understand Clausewitz as chasing this military ideal for Prussia. This because he was at heart a realist in the right sense of the word. Prussia could not act as France had. Important to him was, instead, to preserve political and military dignity as well as freedom of action, especially urgent after the European balance of power had been ruined by Bonaparte at Austerlitz in 1805 and Jena in 1806.

Basically, Clausewitz thought of strategy as an inferior power. Note that the context of military thought matters. The events of 1812 in Russia changed the balance of power dramatically. The continuation of operations was debated politically and militarily in the Allied High Command after Leipzig in late 1813. Clausewitz objected strongly to the approach of limited aim that steered Allied strategy, foremost underpinned by Metternich's policy to negotiate peace with Bonaparte. It was obvious to Clausewitz that a player such as Napoleon had to be defeated thoroughly; otherwise he would reappear as a major player, because as usurper his political future relied on his military might and others' fear. Clausewitz influenced Gneisenau to work for a more offensive strategy in a campaign that crossed the Rhine aiming deep into France, ultimately at Paris.

Consequently, the approach of limited aim ruled Allied strategic thought, of which Clausewitz was well aware from his own experience. He advocated a strategy that simply reversed Bonaparte's strategic method, starting with defence using the new favourable balance of power after Leipzig to continue with the offensive to strike Bonaparte's foundation of political power. This idea of defence was more or less outlined already in early 1812.

Secondly, theoretically the embryo for 'the double ways of war' was put forward in more detail already in Koblenz in 1816-1818, thus at the very beginning of the writings that later became *Vom Kriege*. Clausewitz was at this time engaged in prudent planning for the new Western Theatre of War. Seemingly, he was struck by the general impact of the Enlightenment on military thought in a study of the wars in Flanders,

obviously remembering the disputes over strategy in the Allied Command. This study consulted older literature in preparation for his planning task and he understood at this point the root of the predominant poverty of military thought. He conceptualized a dichotomy between natural war and conventional war in strategic thought. Before this insight he had in fact been rather sceptical about the possibility to write anything theoretically pregnant except definitions, not lost in truisms, about the practical conduct of war.

Clausewitz argued that the *Urbestimmung* of war, the primordial determination of war, hence the warlike element, had been lost in military thought during the Enlightenment. This was a view faintly indicated already in his early notes, but from now on systematically developed. The return to the primordial determination or first principles was a popular way of thinking in other areas of thought at the time. Clausewitz took the standpoint that the original warlike element for strategic thought had started to disappear after the Thirty Years' War during the mighty regime of Louis XIV. War had been restrained by the European balance of power and the belief in general progress during the Enlightenment. War in this period was conducted with 'counterweights', which implied that no real threats to national survival were perceived in this political world.

The military thinkers of the Enlightenment had adopted the *Kriegskunst* as their core tenet. Clausewitz pinpointed in 1818 the 1670s as the time when the military 'engineering principle' of the conduct of war had started to dominate military thought. War became political and diplomatic instead of warlike and popular, i.e. involving the masses. Military literature developed a quest for success in *Kriegskunst* and even *Kriegswissenschaft* to avoid costly bloodshed, thus in clever military designs rather than swift action, fighting involving the common people and decision. The belief in general progress made the thinking of strategy one-sided and wishful, neglecting the true sense of enmity, thus not focused on potential, necessary causes and effects.

According to Clausewitz's historical interpretation Natural War involving the masses was returned to European consciousness by the French Revolution. The wars succeeding the Revolution were fuelled by hostility and public hatred in front of political reason and interests. Basically, Clausewitz undertook to clarify the warlike element lurking behind the screen of conventional war to think strategy properly. His insight was to realize the impact of different intellectual frameworks, thus reaching an understanding similar to what the modern term 'paradigm' implies. His emphasis on the warlike element as foundation for strategic thought was most likely encouraged by a common view that modern war would be like the Napoleonic wars, large and grand in scale, since everybody was now aware of this kind of conflict.

Thirdly, political direction of the conduct of war was, as mentioned, self-evident in practice and present in literature. Clausewitz regarded this aspect as theoretically outside the focus of enquiry. On one hand he propounded a conceptual view of the warlike element and on the other he referred to informative experience to show how the Great Captains had thought strategy in their particular circumstances. Clausewitz's understanding of his own work was that he had only recovered old wisdom known to proficient commanders of all times.

He argued in 1818 that he had developed an 'artless and natural' approach to the conduct of war. In practice the thrust of campaigns was always individual according to particular circumstances. This implied that, to his way of thinking, the warlike elements were more or less modified or transformed in every case. Clausewitz analysed and outlined the warlike element in general theoretical terms up to a certain point. But the explication of defence and attack included the need to consider how to make the conduct of war politically purposeful.

In this process he faced theoretical problems, seemingly in 1826 or early 1827, when he developed the basic forms of war, hence of the warlike element. The solution implied a simplification of the history of war to a 'device of attack and defence'. This device included the explication of *Kulminationspunkt* and *Schwerpunkt*, notably in reciprocity, to explain the aiming of campaigns. Clausewitz considered that defence was the strongest form of war *per se*; due to for example moral aspects, motivation for combat, use of space and the fact that warlike energy was not lost in the same way as extending aggressive attack. The strategic attack could simply defeat itself by the sheer effort originating from an overambitious political purpose.

In addition, military action once more appeared during the 1820s as neat political events rather than warlike wars of rolling violence and hostility, involving the common people. The political framework of Europe was now dominated by Metternich's diplomatic reconstruction of the balance of power. Clausewitz's 1827 adjustment also posited *Spannung*, tension, to describe the fluctuating power of the warlike element, important for the proper aiming of campaigns. Little tension meant that attack and defence were less opposite, thus less energised.

The attacker had also to consider the risk of culmination. Clausewitz decided to see the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, great energised events, as anomalies; but nevertheless as a real threat necessary to warn future generations of Prussians. Tension was not given, but was a product of political circumstances. At this point he wrote the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827, which observed the need to better address the double ways of war and the vantage point for strategy that war simply was the continuation of *Staatspolitik*.

The first kind of war (cf. natural war) became the foundation for thinking strategy when the purpose was to overthrow; thus using decision politically in the Napoleonic manner. The second kind of war (cf. conventional war) prevalent during the Enlightenment was made epitome to think strategy with limited aim, also labelled the 'diplomatic *Kriegskunst*'. Consequently, political direction of the conduct of war was self-evident in practice. He regarded this as given, and it was outside the scope of his enquiry to propound and investigate the warlike element to better explain strategic thought in the command of armies.

This construction, invented at the very beginning of his main phase of writing in Koblenz, underpinned his explication of the double way of war in 1827. Seemingly, it was this early insight of dual intellectual frameworks that made him believe it was possible to say something theoretically pregnant about the conduct of war. It was therefore not new in 1827, but only developed to fit his current problem of explaining defence and attack. His understanding of 'paradigms' triggered him to write more and



more on strategy, texts which ultimately became *Vom Kriege*. Clausewitz's way of thinking can theoretically be compared with the hermeneutics of the time, as used for example in the study of religion, philology and history.

In conclusion, the double way, or kind, of war was not new to Clausewitz in 1827. The device was basically a refinement of his basic understanding to solve a particular problem of how to think about the reciprocity of defence and offence. The adjustment around 1827 utilized the element of *Politik* to dissolve the double way of war in the last chapters written for Book 8. This adjustment restored a floating scale of action, which he preferred. That means this device was only a temporary construction, apparently only employed during 1827. The present work will demonstrate that the element of *Politik* saved the relevance of the warlike element. Thereof his adjusted *Grundsatz*; war (i.e. the warlike element) is the continuation of *Politik* with modified means. Thus, the evidence to justify the 'modern Clausewitz' encapsulated in the double way of war must be refuted.

### 3. WHAT DID CLAUSEWITZ MEAN BY POLITIK?

The Anglophone reading of Clausewitz during the Cold War and the translation of *On War* projected the interpretation '*war is nothing but a continuation of policy by other means*'. This statement was established as 'Clausewitz's dictum', suggesting the essence of political primacy and war as a political instrument, thus that rational and sensible political reason should direct military high command.<sup>63</sup> This was the message of the 'modern Clausewitz' in a nutshell. However, this interpretation and translation of the German word *Politik* are too narrow to reflect Clausewitz's multiple points about the 'element of *Politik*'.<sup>64</sup>

Michael Howard reflected in 2007 on the insufficiency of the English terms policy and politics to catch Clausewitz's German *Politik*. He felt that perhaps 'grand strategy', as later popularized by Paul Kennedy, was better; but stated likewise 'that no English word is really appropriate.'<sup>65</sup> However, grand strategy would be even more misleading. Consequently, the present work frequently uses the German *Politik* to catch the broader interchangeable meaning of the element, ultimately clarified. The present work argues that at least nine aspects are identified in Clausewitz's evolving use and understanding of the 'element of *Politik*'.

First basically, *Politik* as the proficiency of ruling, rooted in Machiavelli, presupposed a very close relation to the proficiency of conducting war: a view clearly explained by for

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<sup>63</sup> See 'dictum' for example in Gordon Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), xvii; Ibid. 'Delbrück: The military historian' in *Makers of modern strategy*, 327; Bernard Brodie, *War & Politics* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), 2; Ibid. 'A Guide to Read on War', Clausewitz, *On War*, 645; Michel Howard, 'British Grand Strategy in World War I', edited by Paul Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 31

<sup>64</sup> This has been partly elaborated in for example: Smith, *On Clausewitz*, 98-110; Bassford, *The Primacy of Policy and the Trinity in Clausewitz's Mature Thought*, 74-90

<sup>65</sup> Michael Howard, 'Foreword Clausewitz's *On War*: A History of the Howard-Paret Translation', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, Edited by Hew Strachan & Andreas Herberg-Rothe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), v-vii. See also in the same collection Jan Willem Honig, 'Clausewitz's *On War*: Problems of Text and Translation', 57-73

example Scharnhorst. The two interrelated proficiencies were elaborated as forms of art in the German of the time; *Regierungskunst*, also *Staatskunst*, and *Kriegskunst*, thus as statecraft and the art of war. Some saw the former transmigrated into the latter in times of war. The term strategy reflected the ability to unite military action and political purpose profitably given prevailing circumstances. This fundamental understanding underlies his evolving ideas.

Clausewitz observed in the very beginning of writing *Vom Kriege* that modern war required a fast decision-action cycle integrating political direction and military action. Strategy could no longer be made in the capital as in former times. Either strategy was made by the army or else the government linked up in the field close to *das große Hauptquartier* to maintain impetus. The latter model of integration was practised by several countries in the campaigns in 1813-1815.

Note that Clausewitz and Gneisenau along with *Kanzler* Hardenberg's political representative planned, in a farmhouse one night in mid-May 1813, the unfolding of the campaign after the combat of Gross Görschen (or Lützen), which resulted in the fierce combat of Bautzen six days later. They all agreed upon the need to win one victory to politically persuade the hesitating Austrians to join forces. This illustrates the very close and self-evident relation of *Politik* and military command in practice. Consequently, Gat's interpretation was misleading, stereotyping Clausewitz.

Secondly, *Politik as underpinning rationality for conducting war and combat* was important to Clausewitz. He consistently used the political motive and purpose in relation to available means to think strategy. War, campaigns, fronts and combat were political means. Military activity had an obvious political function and political final purpose for Clausewitz, from his first texts to his last. His lifelong basic device, political purpose (*Zweck*) and military aims (*Ziel*), for planning and evaluating campaigns reflected this interaction.

Thirdly, *Politik as a dichotomy of might and right* is a problem that underlies Clausewitz's ideas. The political and moral discourse of the Right during the Enlightenment severely criticized the Machiavellian doctrine of *Politik*, unilaterally theorized as power. Kant argued for example that civilized *Politik* had to include a proper moral attitude, which implied the obligation to limit the use of war. Kant's moral canon dominated political life in Prussia in the time when Bonaparte rose to power and became arbiter of Europe.

Clausewitz, among others, perceived in those circumstances disconnected visions and realities, politically as well as militarily. He voiced preferences for Machiavelli's doctrine of *Politik* in his youth, and these consistently underlie his military ideas. However, the power of morality and moral discourse was also observed and used for example to put forward defence as the strongest form of war *per se*. In addition he adopted and developed several key concepts for strategy from the political and moral discourse.<sup>66</sup> The adjustment Clausewitz made in 1827 included a subtle but important reconceptualization of the doctrine of *Politik*, which is clarified in chapter 13.

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<sup>66</sup> See also my earlier essay: Anders Palmgren, 'Clausewitz's interweaving of Krieg and Politik', *Clausewitz The State and War*, 49-70

Fourthly, *Politik as order of society* was fundamental to the reshaping of warfare after the Revolution. Scharnhorst observed already in the 1790s the fundamental difference between Revolutionary France and the Allies, the old absolute monarchies. France could wage war with the entire nation when for example Prussia relied on a professional army, to a large extent recruited abroad. The old dynastic monarchies regarded war mostly as costly political adventures. The people were not interested in defence, because war concerned only the political and military elite due to the principle of order in society. The Prussian Reform set out to develop this weakness, where the military side was headed by Scharnhorst. The old nobility reappeared as a major political player in Prussia after Waterloo and tried to reverse the deeds of the reformers.

Fifthly, *Politik as 'Anschauung und Gefühl'*; Schleiermacher's romantic conception of religion as *view-intuition-idea-conception* and *feeling* has merit for understanding *Politik* as ideology in Clausewitz's terms. Patriotism and Scharnhorst's political view of social order as imperative for patriotic commitment and fighting performance underlie Clausewitz's way of thinking. Schleiermacher theorized '*Anschauung und Gefühl*' as independent of moral doctrine and metaphysics.

To fight for the idea of Prussia and Germany embodied a feeling for doing the right and noble, above ordinary political quibbles. Clausewitz and the patriotic reformers disapproved of prevailing policy for not being enough, honest and right, which the *Bekenntnisdenschrift* of 1812 reflected ultimately. The Prussian Movement and the 'Good Cause' were patriotic *Politik* with the undertone of doing the right, even if it contradicted the policy of the ruler.

Sixthly, *Politik as a device to explain fluctuating warlike energy* was more thoroughly developed in 1826-1827, explained in chapter 12. This to lay bare the nexus of attack and defence related to the concept of war plan, thus making warfare politically productive. The flux of warlike energy was always a major concern for Clausewitz, first in practice and later in framing theory for strategic thought. His analytical approach and view of the warlike element was developed in this process. Clausewitz developed the term *Spannung*, i.e. tension, to depict pulsating warlike energy, crucial to grasp for proper thinking of strategy. On one hand war could be driven by the political rationality of governments, on the other widespread public hatred and hostility could allow players such as Bonaparte to wage reckless grand-style war, seemingly regardless of cost and risk.

It appears that Gerhard Ritter was the first to stress the unilateral instrumental view of war in Clausewitz's ideas. His purpose in 1943 was ironically a criticism of German militarism and reckless war, which neglected the doctrine of *Staatsräson*.<sup>67</sup> From this time *Politik* in Clausewitz's ideas was projected as a moderating force and not as an animating one. These historical events underlie the one-sided instrumental interpretation of Clausewitz during the Cold War, firmly confirmed by the projection of

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<sup>67</sup> Ritter, *Die Lehre Carls von Clausewitz vom politischen Sinn des Krieges*, 41-65

his 'dictum'. Herfried Münkler has revisited Clausewitz's duality by pointing out the distinction between the 'existential view of war' and the 'instrumental view of war'.<sup>68</sup>

However, Clausewitz's point was also to depict the political as the source of warlike energy and dependent on commitment. He perceived disconnected visions and realities during his life, which he tried to embrace theoretically. His solution included the concept of *Spannung*, the notion that tension arising from every actual conflict provided an individual, broader political setting of war for strategic thought.

In 1827 Clausewitz shifted his analytical perspective from a given conceptual logic of war, modified in reality, to a view of war as an 'empty concept' before every actual conflict. The element *Politik* in terms of conflict was developed as the 'womb of war', which caused shifting and pulsating warlike energy, crucial for the statesman and the commander to grasp to think strategy properly. The individual, broader conditions of *Politik* ramified possible warlike aims and political purposes. In that sense his catchphrase 'war is the continuation of *Politik* with other means' is more than a truism for strategic thought.

Seventhly, *Politik as explanation of the lack of regular causes of success in cases of low tension* underpinned the adjustment in 1827, thus, a major reason for the reference in the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827. This was a lack of 'warlike logic' close to equilibrium in thinking strategy. Clausewitz had then propounded 'the device of attack and defence' between *Schwerpunkt* and *Kulminationspunkt*. He had put forward limited aim as a consequence of the fact that the offensive could defeat itself by sheer effort, thus improper strategy with no harmony between political purpose and warlike aim in the prevailing circumstances. Clausewitz had returned to the history of 'conventional wars' to find theoretical inspiration. These cases displayed low tension, no polarity of attack and defence, often no real will to fight, which implied cases resembling defence against defence.

Consequently, approaching equilibrium he found only weak or no regularity of causes of success, which was insufficient to develop as precepts, by extension as practical guidelines for thinking about limited aims. Chance and timely talent when and where required ruled rather than strict theory. Theory rooted in combat and victory was strong and easy to conceptualize in cases of high tension, but the opposite was the case close to equilibrium. Clausewitz observed here the impact of cautious political reasoning where no-one was bold enough to play. He compared the political view of war in those circumstances with 'suffering', where there was no real warlike interest that underpinned action. War became more 'political', subject to incoherent political direction not following any hard-core, warlike logic.

In the outer perimeters of tension war was more 'warlike' when people and rulers were eager to fight to the utmost. Clausewitz stated that *Politik* (as reason) was simply shadowed by the 'warlike' in times of great tension, but was anyway present. This

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<sup>68</sup> Herfried Münkler, 'Instrumentelle und existentielle Auffassung des Krieges bei Carl von Clausewitz', *Über den Krieg – Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegel ihrer theoretischen Reflexion*, 5. Ed. (Birkach: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2008, first 2002), 91-115

conclusion was not new to him; it had been nurtured by experience. For example, in the Autumn Campaign of 1813 he had complained that the Swedish Crown Prince, Bernadotte, then Commander of the Northern Army, had not pursued what was strategically important to defeat Bonaparte. Bernadotte's strategy had instead favoured the Swedish political interest to weaken the Danes, allied to France. Consequently, Clausewitz's clearer conception of *Politik* in 1827 was in this sense just an analytical refinement to reflect situations of weak warlike logic according to his theoretical construction. In this sense it was better to embrace conditions known to him from experience and better to develop the theoretical problem of standstill when no movement of the whole occurred.

Eighthly, *Politik as a shifting condition for exercising military command* was noted by Clausewitz. Thinking strategy as a 'tiny cog' in great state machinery – like Turenne under Louis XIV – was indeed different from being a Bonaparte, who in one person both commanded the army and governed the state. Their freedoms of action were simply very different, which diminished the prospect of a military canon, common military principles for conducting war. Consequently, Clausewitz's final concept of theory for thinking strategy properly was limited to studying and consideration. Precepts for action previously distilled by following the warlike element and illuminating experience were to be considered in didactic terms only. Strategic theory should simply be a *Betrachtung*, a consideration, inspection of action, contemplation instead of a *Lehre*, i.e. doctrine and practical lesson.

Ninthly, *Politik as a hypernym* (cf. *Oberbegriff*) for the concept of war was part of the adjustment in 1827. Clausewitz simply subsumed war theoretically under the concept of *Politik*. In this sense no big deal, but a measure to gain theoretical coherence. Every war had an individual nature, thus no lurking permanent warlike logic modified in reality. Consequently, strategic thought had no clear generic logic from which to develop present success. It is misleading to explicate categories of war from Clausewitz's thought. On the contrary, *Politik* saved war, hence the warlike element, as a coherent concept, as unfolded in Book 8, and dissolved the temporary use of the 'double ways of war'.

Clausewitz disliked categories of war, since reality was regarded as always 'somewhere in between'. The element of *Politik* meant for Clausewitz that warlike energy originated from conditions of conflict that are essentially political between shrewd interests and hatred, which interaction animates war individually and provides a different amount of coercive power for a player to fulfil a political purpose. Simply put, the warlike element was charged differently from underpinning conditions of *Politik* in a broad sense, which the strategist had to consider. *Politik* and war was developed in an organic relationship to think strategy properly. The 'organic approach' was a significant feature of Romantic thought in general.<sup>69</sup> The 'mechanical approach' to generating theories of social affairs was also popular and Clausewitz used both. Clausewitz refuted the concept of war as a solid field of thought; instead he made it fully dependent on particular circumstances.

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<sup>69</sup> Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2002)

Contrary to many interpretations, he did not coin political primacy, which was self-evident, though often neglected in military literature. However, the view of proper politics and policy was also a matter for continual disputes among the political, diplomatic and military elites. So, Clausewitz developed tradition into the embryo of a richer and more many-sided, integrated theoretical framework. He had a clear practical motive, to ameliorate friction in terms of cognitive dissonance between civil and military perspectives of strategy. Thus, he sought to enhance strategic vision and theoretically improve realism in Prussian strategic thought.

He intended to warn future generation of Prussians against reckless war in the style of Bonaparte. Yet his reconstruction by explicating *Politik* actually saved the concept of warlike element, or absolute war, which fulfilled his theoretical purpose at the time. To Clausewitz's satisfaction, the reconstruction kept the 'absolut *Gestalt* of war' hovering permanently in the background of every war for strategic thought. In conclusion, the evidence underpinning the belief of a great gulf, a rupture, in his ideas must be refuted. Consequently, the dominating image of the 'modern Clausewitz' needs to be modified. The present work will develop this further.

#### 4. HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THE 'WUNDERLICHE DREIFALTIGKEIT'?

Clausewitz's conclusion was that war, given its close relation to the element *Politik* and element of chance, hence individual conditions, should to be thought of as a '*wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*', i.e. as a trinity with a strange effect. The end of the first chapter of *Vom Kriege* expressed this well-known device. Basically this device concisely brought his reconstruction to depict fluctuations of war as intimate to the aspects of *Politik*. The proper English translation has been discussed: examples are 'wondrous trinity', 'paradoxical trinity' and 'miraculous trinity'. Michael Howard recently suggested 'amazing trinity', but stated he was open for suggestions.<sup>70</sup>

But none of these translations catch the shifting, composite challenge Clausewitz's tried to depict theoretically. '*Wunderliche*' relates to '*eigensinnig*' and should be understood in German to have a strange effect, or as wilful, or as whimsically. This meaning relates to '*launisch*' and this implies capricious and unpredictable: I suggest 'fickle trinity', which sufficiently strikes Clausewitz's theoretical tone and point.

The adjustment included the view that war was not 'one thing' but a composite, individually charged foremost from the power of three dominating tendencies, rooted in the three major elements – the warlike element, the element of chance and the element of *Politik*. Firstly, the warlike element was to consider as a *blind instinct*; secondly, the element of chance made war a *free activity of talent* and thirdly, the element of *Politik* gave war the status of being merely a tool. The subordinate nature of war as a political tool made it to 'fall prey to *pure reason*'. Note that the present work suggests a slightly modified translation. Clausewitz included a subtle criticism, adjustment, of the doctrine of *Politik*. These tendencies gave in consequence a fickle appearance of war, which strategic thought had to understand. This framing catches Clausewitz's theorizing of *Politik* and warlike energy in flux. The present work suggests

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<sup>70</sup> Howard, 'Foreword to Clausewitz's On War: A History of the Howard-Paret Translation', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, v-vii

a new translation of the passage outlining the 'fickle trinity' and its consequence for theory in chapter 13.

Note that the final description of the challenge to make theory tackled the fallacy of pet concepts and predetermined values for action in theorizing the conduct of war. Clausewitz depicted the theoretical task of keeping a theory '*schwebend*', i.e. hovering, hanging free, between these three tendencies, which was compared to three '*Anziehungspunkten*', normally translated as 'magnets'. The present work suggests points of intellectual attraction or, as alternative, cynosures.

Consequently, a theory for thinking strategy properly could neither neglect nor lock onto one of these points of intellectual attraction, to develop arguments of strategy unilaterally. A theory for thinking strategy properly must allow these three points of intellectual attraction to interact freely, otherwise reality would be immediately contradicted. However, it is striking how successive generations of readers have preferred to follow one of these intellectual attractions to decode his ideas and strategy.

The present work will develop the consequence of this way of reading more thoroughly in the final chapter. In addition the suggestive undertone of this device as Clausewitz's testament, hence his sole legacy needs to be modified. This device was only an analytical adjustment, which had the purpose to set a proper theoretical tone for the rest of the work. The present work argues that Clausewitz's work should be read as an evolving but coherent investigation of the doctrine of the warlike element. Clausewitz's legacy is his stringent analysis, which derives a clear theoretical result as outlined in the revised Book 2. But to understand that result one has to understand his analytical path, his train of thought, to distinguish the problems, phases of transition and consequent adjustments of initial hypothesis. Clausewitz should be read and discussed in reference to his train of thought, which actually produces a critical theoretical result to be contested.

## 5. HOW SHOULD WE IN BROAD TERMS COMPREHEND CLAUSEWITZ AND HIS WORK?

Interpretations of Clausewitz have projected his personality and the scope of his work very differently. For example Colonel Wilhelm von Scherff, editor of the fourth edition of *Vom Kriege* (1880) added what was probably the first thick reader's guide to the work. Scherff spoke of Clausewitz as '*der General*', '*der erste Kriegsphilosoph*' and the importance of understanding the '*Clausewitzschen Geiste*' that preached war as bloody energy.<sup>71</sup> To clarify 'defence' and 'offence', his message was said to be offensive - '*Ueberall Blitz der Geist der Offensive*'. Clausewitz's propounding of defence as the strongest form of war *per se* was labelled a 'philosophical trick' to have people understand the obvious opposite: the power of offence. Regardless of the quality and purpose of Scherff's interpretation, Clausewitz became the philosopher of war from

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<sup>71</sup> Wilhelm v. Scherff, 'Zur Einführung, Metz January 1880', Carl v. Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Erläutert und mit Anmerkungen durch W. von Scherff, Militärische Klassiker des In und Auslandes, Zweites Heft (Berlin: F. Schneider & Co, 1880), I-VI

this time, hence a metaphysical friend, vague enough to support every contradictory standpoint on war.

In the 1970s Peter Paret painted a very different portrait. He wanted to make a point about the role of the modern state in relation to Clausewitz. Paret saw in him a person who had almost moved away from the military world due to political circumstances and had become a researcher of war in a world of scholars. Paret argued that: 'The purpose of Clausewitz's theoretical writings was to develop not a new doctrine but a truer understanding of the phenomenon of war...*On War* is an attempt to penetrate to the essence of its subject.'<sup>72</sup> Paret compared Clausewitz's work, somewhat simplified, to Husserlian phenomenology with a quest for *Wesenschau*. He recently defended this interpretation.<sup>73</sup>

Paret saw also in Clausewitz, perhaps justifiably, the rise of a historian who increasingly excelled in the 'comparative method'.<sup>74</sup> He pointed correctly to Clausewitz's combative posture vis-à-vis older military theory.<sup>75</sup> Paret paints a sympathetic picture of Clausewitz, which appeared as a continuation and correction of Hans Rothfahl's more depressed post-war image in *Krieg und Politik* (1920).<sup>76</sup> However, Paret's interpretation gave the impression that Clausewitz had sought the true nature of war, the essence of war in general terms, which leads us slightly astray. Aron's concurrent work *Penser la Guerre: Clausewitz* (1976) suggests a similar message in another type of interpretation.

Gat's interpretation of Clausewitz (1989/2001) was constructed to fit his general framework of military thought, a bit too well perhaps.<sup>77</sup> His standpoint that military thinking depends on its particular milieu of thought is easy to accept. Gat argued, seemingly influenced by Paret, that Clausewitz had had a lifelong ambition to propound a 'Universal Theory of War'.<sup>78</sup> And, further 'The Nature of War' as 'military decisiveness and political greatness: the Napoleonic model'. Gat tended to mix terms and to take conclusions somewhat too far. In this case also, Kessel had made loose references and suggested that one could interpret Clausewitz's achievement as the creation of a 'theory' even if his work was unfinished.

Hew Strachan's interpretation (2007) also followed Paret in terms of scope: 'Since his [Clausewitz's] ambition was to establish something that explained war as a universal phenomenon....'<sup>79</sup> He suggested, as Gat had, that Clausewitz had faced a 'crisis' in 1827, when his historical studies showed that his theory did not reflect all wars.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 356-58, cf. 356

<sup>73</sup> Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*, 119-20

<sup>74</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 132

<sup>75</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 356

<sup>76</sup> See also the apposite review of Paret's work by C.B.A. Behrens, 'Which Side Was Clausewitz On?', *The New York Review of Books* (14 October 1976), 41-43

<sup>77</sup> Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 158-265

<sup>78</sup> Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 192-200; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 156.

<sup>79</sup> Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War*, 77

<sup>80</sup> Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War*, 77



Strachan's conclusion stressed that *On War* is an unfinished and somewhat inconsistent work-in-progress: 'The extraordinary fertility of his mind means that any attempt to seek uniformity and consistency in his arguments runs the risk of doing violence to their insights.'<sup>81</sup> Antulio Echevarria's interpretation (2007) also framed Clausewitz's theoretical output as a universal theory of war:

Clausewitz's masterpiece is an attempt to capture what he called objective knowledge, observations that were universally valid and thus applicable to all wars. Ultimately he desired to present this knowledge as a scientific theory, that is, an organized body, not unlike Copernicus' heliocentric theory, he also thought of laws in different senses, as a fundamental cause-and-effect relationships; discovering these would give his theory coherence. He used theory in several ways, one of which was to indicate an organized corpus of scientific observations. This, in brief, is what *On War* is.<sup>82</sup>

Jon Tetsuro Sumida's *Decoding Clausewitz* (2008) pinpointed the overlooking of defence as the strongest form of war as a mistake of English-speaking readers. Sumida severely criticized earlier way-pointing modern interpretations.<sup>83</sup> These had picked and projected fragments and not looked at the whole. Paret and Aron had misunderstood Clausewitz's theoretical intent in suggesting *On War* as an 'explanation of the essential nature of war' and judging completeness and achievement from that perspective.<sup>84</sup>

Sumida suggested that the scope was a 'theory of practice' rather than as a 'theory of phenomenon'. Further to bolster his interpretation he argued that Clausewitz had foreshadowed philosophical standpoints from Collingwood and Wittgenstein, among others. According to Sumida *On War* was a practical handbook for peacetime training of commanders with a focus on the mental re-enactment of historical case studies of command decisions: 'I thus regard *On War* as a set of instructions on how to engage in serious learning of a highly personal nature rather than an impersonal representation of the totality of that which is to be learned.'<sup>85</sup>

The present work argues that we should first understand Clausewitz as an officer at heart, a *Generalmajor* with the selfish desire to become *Generalleutnant*; a political realist and military pragmatist with the gift, or peculiarity, to easily think in pregnant abstractions. If Romanticism simply reflected an unsatisfied longing for completeness as some have suggested, then Clausewitz was a real Romanticist. He was rarely fully satisfied with his texts, but anyway confident that he was good at thinking militarily. An important purpose of his major work was to explain how Prussia's military and political elite should think strategy properly. In that sense he was less 'scholarly' and less 'philosophical' than most modern interpretations suggest.

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<sup>81</sup> Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's On War*, 193-94

<sup>82</sup> Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 3

<sup>83</sup> Paret defended his standpoints in Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*, 155-56 n.20

<sup>84</sup> Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, 59

<sup>85</sup> Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, 5

The 'undated note', written in 1826 or in the winter of 1827 described his major work that became *Vom Kriege*: first, as a '*Manuskript über die Führung des großen Krieges*', a manuscript on the conduct of Great War, thus about strategy in the traditional sense as the command of an army.<sup>86</sup> Secondly, that the theory of Great War was equivalent to strategy, '*Die Theorie des großen Krieges oder die sogenannte Strategie*'. Thirdly, that he had the ambition to propound a '*philosophischer Aufbau der Kriegskunst*', a philosophical construction of the art of war.<sup>87</sup> Theory implied, more or less, thinking right about action for the purpose of action. Clausewitz was taught the importance of 'the proper form of thinking' during his general staff training in the early 1800s, and this stayed with him during his career. A later study explained this view of theory quite clearly: 'We do not consider anything we have thought as a merit of theory, instead the way we have thought it [the matter] through.'<sup>88</sup>

So, did Clausewitz leave the military world behind and transmigrate into academia in a historiographical quest for proper mapping of the essence of war, as projected by Paret et al.? No, the present work does not perceive his intellectual development in this way. Clausewitz's purpose was to put forward a philosophical construction of the *Kriegskunst*, how to think strategy properly. This meant enhancing his own and his reader's proficiency to command an army, obviously foremost the Prussian; even if sharp thinking violated moral and political doctrine.

He had clearly a practical political and military grasp, which he wielded theoretically. Clausewitz thought about strategy with Prussia in mind, in terms of the predominant problems in political life and military discourse. However, his intellectual achievement clearly contains constructions relevant outside of his context. Yet most of these constructions are best or most easily understood within Clausewitz's own context to realize and ponder their particular range. For example, *Schwerpunkt* was to be thought of in relation to *Kulminationspunkt*. These were intertwined with others aspects, altogether crucial for him to grasp the multilevel reciprocity of defence and attack in thinking strategy proper.

Had Clausewitz, as suggested by Gat, the lifelong ambition to construct a 'universal theory of war'? No, the present work does not perceive his intellectual development in that way. It was more fragmentary and dependent on situation; but he had a fairly consistent set of core beliefs developed and expanded over the years in different, successive contexts. It was not until after Waterloo, working in Koblenz, that he realized he could write something more theoretically pregnant about the conduct of war, outside definitions, now with reference to different 'paradigms'.

Clausewitz was in many ways 'Scharnhorst's apostle' as expressed by Gneisenau in 1823. Basically, he disliked the predominant way of writing about strategy, in

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<sup>86</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - winter 1827], 'Undated note amended to *Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 181-83, cf. 181

<sup>87</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - winter 1827], 'Undated note amended to *Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 181-83, cf. 182

<sup>88</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Strategische Kritik des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich', *Werke* 7/10 (1835), 357-470, cf 360-61 'Nicht was wir gedacht haben halten wir für ein Verdienst um die Theorie, sondern die Art wie wir es gedacht haben.'

impersonal strategic systems suggesting different set of arbitrary military principles, like Bülow and Jomini. Clausewitz was in that sense a forerunner of the historicist approach to the study of historical experience.

Strategy should be studied in flesh and blood according to individual circumstances. That meant how the Great Captains had thought strategy and commanded their armies in the face of danger: basically how purpose and means had interacted in their particular performance. It is misleading to understand Clausewitz as a theorist of Bonaparte's performance. Bonaparte was the enemy, even if he was 'the God of War'. Clausewitz rather codified the ideas of the Prussian Reform and rebirth of the Prussian war construction in the deeds of his dear friends Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. In addition one should not underestimate the codification of his contributions in ideas, deeds and beliefs during these years of suffering and struggle.

Basically, he often uncovered cause-and-effect relations for strategic thought in imaginative ways. Not all his texts of course maintain the same theoretical standard, but his views are mostly sharp and to the point about basic military ideas. It is misleading to believe one will find sophisticated and subtle dialectical structures hidden in every text. That Clausewitz, as Aron suggested, had a lifelong method of creating arguments is therefore also slightly misleading.

Clausewitz simply, as Scharnhorst had taught him, used historical experience to think about the higher conduct of war, thus to address contemporary problems of strategic thought. Scharnhorst's apostle liked to think in contrasts to create intellectual dynamics, a *Spielraum*, which practice might grasp. His texts incorporated this way of writing dialectics to varying degrees. In the very beginning, in 1817, Clausewitz was strikingly described as a mind of a 'dialectical nature' with the inclination to exaggerate. He was also compared intellectually to Schleiermacher, the father of modern Protestant hermeneutics.<sup>89</sup>

Clausewitz's work did not seek to explain war in general, as a phenomenon and so on. His analytics may resemble such an ambition in some parts, but I clearly see the general reference as Prussia. We can of course, like later interpreters, see a more general value in his achievement; but should not forget his purpose and context. Clausewitz strove to write truthfully and with talent about historical events so as to learn and develop strategic thought. His purpose was simply to develop the 'form of strategic thinking' operating in the conceptual interspace between tactics and politics; ultimately to teach the intellectual aspects of commanding the Prussian Army successfully. In conclusion:

- a. From the perspective of problem: we should read *Vom Kriege* as an evolving investigation of the proper form of strategic thought. This was basically conducted as an enquiry of the doctrine of the warlike element. Clausewitz's work nests in an evolving but consistent train of thought, which the present work will demonstrate.

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<sup>89</sup> Johann Friedrich Benzenberg to Gneisenau, 19 May 1817, cited by Hahlweg in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 272 n 7.

- b. From the perspective of intention: we should read *Vom Kriege* as a philosophical construction of the *Kriegskunst*, a practical philosophy of strategy to enhance realism in strategic vision. Basically the work is theorized from the recognition of the warlike element. This construction is an open structure mixing fundamental insights and concepts with the need for continual refinement in practical terms.
- c. From the perspective of theory: *Vom Kriege* was not intended as an investigation of war as such, as 'a general theory of war'. But Clausewitz's result has obviously theoretical merits in a larger perspective. The work clarifies fundamental ontological and epistemological standpoints for military thought that stand the test of time. Note that his work refutes war as a 'military thing' for strategic thought.
- d. From the perspective of doctrine: we should read *Vom Kriege* as a clarification of a common platform, a joint political and military stand- and viewpoint to consider strategic problems for Prussia. Observe that study, hence higher military education, assumes a crucial role before doctrine. Military *Bildung* was a combination of scientific enquiry and training of practical judgment. In conclusion, theory was not a substitute for practical judgment.

## 6. WHAT WAS CLAUSEWITZ'S RESULT?

The contemporary popular dichotomy between the 'nature of war' and the 'character of war' created foremost out of the English translation of *Vom Kriege* easily gives a wrong impression about Clausewitz's result. Some take his *Vorstellung*, the chameleon, a conceptual depiction of war, too literally. This gives a misleading interpretation, suggesting that Clausewitz regarded war as having a permanent, stable, inner nature; thus the same basic logic for every strategic case; that war only took on 'new military clothes' to look different in new cases. Clausewitz's adjusted point of view about strategic thought was rather the opposite. The strategist has to develop every problem according to individual circumstances. Clausewitz used the 'fickle trinity' to clarify this standpoint and set a proper intellectual tone to strategic thought.

In 1989 Gat re-interpreted the date of the 'undated note' from 1830, as established by Rosinski, to early 1827. This he did by comparing contents and the other notes and prefaces amended to *Vom Kriege*.<sup>90</sup> The same had already been suggested by Hahlweg in his final collection of Clausewitz's non-published texts (1990).<sup>91</sup> Gat's interpretation was recently contested by Kai Lütsch and 1830 was suggested anew.<sup>92</sup> The present work argues that Hahlweg and Gat were more or less correct. The 'undated note' was without doubt written in the winter of 1827 or even somewhat earlier in 1826. Lacking external references, the exact time in this period cannot be determined.

The text Clausewitz was satisfied with in the 'undated note' was his earlier *Grundvorstellung* entitled '1<sup>st</sup> Chapter. Purpose of War', first published in the

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<sup>90</sup> Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz's final notes', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, Vol 1 (1989), 45-50; Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 257-65

<sup>91</sup> Hahlweg, 'Niederschriften des Werkes Vom Kriege', in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 623-29, cf. 625

<sup>92</sup> Lütsch, *Jeder Krieg is anders. Jeder Krieg ist gleich*, 70-75.

collection of 1990.<sup>93</sup> Hahlweg never explained this text in relation to the undated note. But a closer examination, as demonstrated in the present work, clearly supports the contention that this draft text was the one Clausewitz had in mind in the undated note. So, the verdict used to interpret and project 'Clausewitz's testament' in terms of the text printed as chapter one of *Vom Kriege* was pronounced on false premises. This text was an essay inserted by Clausewitz's brother-in-law when editing the work for the press during spring 1832. Clausewitz never replaced his first *Grundvorstellung*. He was eager to tell his friend Karl von der Gröben about the revised text in November 1829, but at the same time ambivalent as to the result. This was because it was against his *Grundsatz*, his basic view of war, as an act of force.<sup>94</sup>

The present work argues that Clausewitz's main work was more or less devoted to the problem of developing a proper form of thinking strategy, with Prussia first in mind. The work was conducted as an investigation and clarification of the warlike element, which included continual problem-solving. The 'undated note' should not be viewed as his final statement. It was written in 1826 or 1827.

Part	Content	Note	Approximate time
1	The warlike element outlined - A <i>Grundvorstellung</i> , of war and the warlike element - The concept of warlike genius - The concept atmosphere of war.	Revised later At least partly part of the small volume	November 1816-1824
2	The concept of theory for the art of war	Revised later Partly part of the small volume	November 1816-1824
3	The concept of strategy in terms of the warlike element	Partly part of the small volume	November 1816-1824
4	The concept and composition of combat		1824-1825
5	The concept of armed forces		1824-1826
6	The concept of defence in reciprocity to attack	The problem The undated note	1826-spring 1827
7	The concept of attack in reciprocity to defence.	The <i>Nachricht</i> 10 July 1827	1827
8	The concept of war plan	Phase of transition Part of the adjustment	1827
1.2	Examining and revising the <i>Grundvorstellung</i> .	The adjustment	Autumn 1827 - 1829
2.2	Revising the concept of theory	The adjustment	1826-1830

FIGURE 1 THE CREATION OF *VOM KRIEGE* IN BROAD TERMS

<sup>93</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36

<sup>94</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, 21 November 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der Moderne Kriegslehre*, 422-23

It is correct that the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827 expressed an intention to revisit the earlier manuscripts, but this was before Clausewitz had revisited the *Grundvorstellung* and produced the revised concept of theory in Book 2. Concurrently he took on his two longest strategic studies, finalized in the spring of 1830. Consequently, this leaves two possibilities: either Clausewitz was satisfied with the result or he was tired, not inspired enough to come further when he decided to re-enter active service 1830. It may be a combination. His intention was, anyway, posthumous publication.

Consequently, the projection of a fundamental gulf in his ideas leads astray indeed. On the contrary he probably managed, more or less, to do the work he intended. Seemingly, he had achieved the intended outline, to explain the form of strategic thought derived from the warlike element. Clausewitz had then clarified the eight most important conceptual aspects of thinking strategy proper from a *Grundvorstellung* of war in Book 1 to the war plan in Book 8. This included adjustment of ontology and scope of theory to achieve theoretical coherence.<sup>95</sup>

We can benefit from his effort by embarking on a study that moves in a historical landscape of great dynamics, morally, politically and militarily. The present work will demonstrate that the straightforward List of Contents of *Vom Kriege* above was underpinned by great personal effort. Clausewitz's collected works consisted of many different texts, not always easy to follow and structure. To portray Clausewitz's work as following a perfect, orderly, deliberate course seems not to reflect the way it was created. The choice of analytical viewpoint and theoretical perspective determines, more or less, how we judge *Vom Kriege* and the state of completion. The final chapter will discuss Clausewitz's result in more detail from several viewpoints. The present work will explain the analytical path to the work that became *Vom Kriege*, structured into fourteen chapters according to the following outline.

## OUTLINE OF THE PRESENT WORK

*Chapter 2* discusses theoretical aspects and methodological implications for interpreting military thought in general and Clausewitz in particular. It clarifies choices made in the process of the work. First, ontology is discussed with Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* as the basic approach. Secondly, the interface between text and context is discussed. Here Quentin Skinner's contextual approach is basically adopted. Thirdly, the concept of situation in relation to interpretation is elaborated. Fourthly, the interface of text and reader is discussed, so as to structure a framework for basically comprehending interpretations of Clausewitz. Fifthly, language and discourse are briefly treated. Finally, the aspect of interpretation as problem-solving and the criteria of novelty are discussed to motivate choices made.

*Chapter 3* elucidates briefly Clausewitz's military *Bildung* under Scharnhorst's supervision. This is followed by a review of the tensions he perceived between theoretical visions and practical realities, politically as well as militarily, that terminated in the disastrous defeats at Jena and Auerstedt in October 1806. In addition the chapter follows Bonaparte's pursuit and the roll-up of Prussia's remaining defence that

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<sup>95</sup> See also figure 5 in chapter 14

more or less caused the implosion of old Prussia. The chapter ends at New Year 1807 and Clausewitz's first testimony regarding the ongoing, tumultuous events.

*Chapter 4* elaborates Clausewitz's imprisonment in France. It addresses his doubts and reflections about the German way of thinking, which he identified as political weakness. *Politik* as patriotism is raised at a time of despair as the natural way forward, a political view that infused the reform of Prussia in 1807-1812. Further handled are aspects of the German way of thinking in terms of Romantic hermeneutics, important for understanding Clausewitz. The chapter ends with a brief analysis of his military thought to develop and teach the art of war in the midst of reform.

*Chapter 5* addresses: first, the *Bekenntnisdenschrift*, which spelled out the reformer's political and military posture – to fight finally and all-out for freedom. Secondly, the narrative follows Clausewitz's efforts and suffering in Russia until the crucial turn of tide manifested by the convention of Tauroggen in December 1812. Thirdly, the narrative covers the very happy time as Russian liaison officer during the Spring Campaign of 1813, which took him into the inner circle of the Prussian HQ. Fourthly, Clausewitz's activity as Chief-of-General-Staff in the Russo-German Legion; part of the Allied Northern Army fighting on the flank during the Autumn Campaign of 1813 and the Winter Campaign of 1814, which ended in Paris. Fifthly, Clausewitz's deeds as Chief-of-General-Staff in one of Prussia's four Army Corps during the 100 days are described. The chapter ends in the outskirts of Paris in late June 1815. The chapter notes Clausewitz's experience as the foundation of his ideas and concepts.

*Chapter 6* visualizes Clausewitz's situation and practical doings in the aftermath of Waterloo when he started to write the work that later became *Vom Kriege*. The practical side informs the theoretical side. The chapter analyses first Clausewitz's observations about the tricky transition to peace in France in the summer of 1815, where he criticises the crude and not politically shrewd behaviour of his colleagues. Further his observation on dynamic enmity in Le Mans, which became part of his theoretical core. Secondly, the happy time in Koblenz as Gneisenau's Chief-of-General-Staff is described. Thirdly the chapter analyses Clausewitz's work to prepare plans for the new Western Theatre; this to provide some insights into him as a planner. Finally, his political deeds and rehabilitation are elaborated to point out his pragmatism, disproving the image of him as a naive idealist. On the contrary it displays a person fully aware of tricky political and military realities.

*Chapter 7* outlines the post-war start of Clausewitz's writings. His historical interpretation distilled a dichotomy of natural war and conventional war. This insight made him believe that he had found the root of the poverty of predominant military thought, which he labelled pejoratively as scholar-strategy. The chapter analyses first Clausewitz's early motives for writing a piece on strategy; secondly, his realization of the root of poverty of current military thought which, as indicated, seemingly inspired him to write. Thirdly, the important essay problematizing strategy between stagnation and progress in warlike activity, which he sent to Gneisenau in March 1817, is analysed. Ten important aspects are identified, which help to understand Clausewitz's later writings. Finally, Clausewitz's recovery of the *Urbestimmung* of war for strategic

thought is addressed. Thus the chapter outlines the theoretical foundation of his future work.

*Chapter 8* elucidates Clausewitz's first period in Berlin from 1819 to about 1823. The aftermath of war was very largely a period of political turmoil, '*Umtriebe*'. In this turmoil 'the men of 1806' regained the upper hand and the reformers' influence was pressed back, to which his analytical texts objected. First come Clausewitz's early ambitions in Berlin along with the political turmoil that rumbled the German states after the peace; Second, Clausewitz's essay titled *Umtriebe*. This developed an interesting historical perspective to comprehend the current turmoil. Thirdly, Clausewitz's analysis of Friedrich's strategy intended to disprove backward-striving interpretations and ruling older theory is briefly addressed. The chapter ends with a brief analysis of the 1806 campaign and Clausewitz's severe criticism of the men of 1806. Seemingly, this work encouraged the transmigration to *Vom Kriege*.

*Chapter 9* analyses the first sets of theoretical texts; some likely part of the small volume, which transmigrated into the larger analytical frame that finally became *Vom Kriege*. The chapter suggests 1823-1824 as a likely time for this transmigration. It also constitutes a very important component of this work, analysing first Clausewitz's new standpoint on the theory of war, rooted in the historical analysis that distilled natural war and conventional war. Secondly, the first *Grundvorstellung* of War, hence the warlike element is explained, and this most likely was the text referred to in the undated note. Thirdly, the warlike element as the *Geist* of modern strategy, thus the basic devices that Clausewitz regarded relevant for proper strategic thought in the early stages of analysis, are addressed.

*Chapter 10* follows the development of the concept of combat in Book 4 and the concept of fighting forces in Book 5, when the larger frame of *Vom Kriege* was apparently in place. This was also a time when Clausewitz's health deteriorated. While this forced him to stay indoors for months, the time was obviously used for writing. The chapter analyses how Clausewitz systematized combat to illuminate the impact sphere of victory. Secondly the concept of fighting forces is analysed in relation to fighting. Up to this point of analysis Clausewitz had not divided war into defence and attack. The chapter ends with an exposition of Clausewitz's life and poor health at this time. In addition, his use of historical studies to understand strategy is analysed.

*Chapter 11* elaborates the problem Clausewitz confronted when dynamically conceptualising the two forms of the warlike element to make war politically purposeful. Despite troubles he was determined that a theory was possible. The chapter explains how he solved this puzzle by interpreting the history of war as a 'device of attack and defence', among other things. First, the 'Undated Note' is revisited and it is argued it was written in 1826 or in the winter of 1827, more or less concurring with Hahlweg's and Gat's interpretations. Secondly how Clausewitz solved his problem of the reciprocity of defence and attack by explaining limited aim is clarified. Finally, the 'device of attack and defence' between *Schwerpunkt* and *Kulminationspunkt* is described.

*Chapter 12* reviews the transition phase that took place in conceptualizing the attack and the war plan, which preceded the revision of the *Grundvorstellung*. The chapter



analyses first the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827, which included the frank explication of *Politik*. Secondly the chapter addresses Clausewitz's sketch of the concept of attack that included the device of *Kulminationspunkt*. He used this to depict the inevitable apogee of extending the attack physically and morally to further clarify the strength of defence. The chapter ends with an analysis of the parts of Book 8 that preceded the revision of the *Grundvorstellung*. The book on the concept of war plan reflected the transition from one point of view to a modified one, natural in any sophisticated intellectual work.

*Chapter 13* addresses Clausewitz's adjustment of analytical perspective in the final texts and his attitude to the result. He argued from this time that strategy should be thought as *Politik* with modified means. The use and intensity of combat depended on level of hostility, which means the tension of *Politik* in the individual case. The chapter analyses first the revision of *Grundvorstellung* including the important letters to Major Röder at Christmas 1827 and the last set of texts written for Book 8. Clausewitz finally took the position that the form of thinking most suitable to strategy was similar to *Politik*. Secondly, the concept of theory for strategic thought is revised, including his final standpoints to achieve coherence in his argument. He suggests that the concept of theory should be limited to intelligent consideration for a didactic purpose. Thirdly, the final two studies of strategy in Bonaparte's campaigns 1796 and 1799 are briefly elaborated. A note on Clausewitz's final attitude to the text that examines a proper *Grundvorstellung* of war and the warlike element concludes the chapter.

*Chapter 14* proffers final reflections and fusion of horizons. The present work is summarised and discussed along with observations on different readings of *Vom Kriege*, different interpretations and aspects of military thinking. Some implications on military education are also suggested. The chapter outlines 48 paragraphs to make the result of the present work clear. It follows the structure of 'theory and trinity', thus the view of theory, the warlike element, the element of *Politik* and the element of chance. These four analytical components embrace Clausewitz's train of thought in a good way; in addition they keep focus on the theoretically important.

## 2. INTERPRETING MILITARY THOUGHT

### THEORETICAL ASPECTS, METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The theme and object of research are actually constituted by motivation of the inquiry. Hence historical research is carried along by the historical movement of life itself and cannot be understood teleologically in terms of the object into which it is inquiring. Such an 'object in itself' [cf. the nature of war] clearly does not exist at all. This is precisely what distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences.<sup>96</sup>

Hans-Georg Gadamer 1960

This chapter discusses theoretical aspects and methodological implications of interpreting military thought in general and Clausewitz in particular. It clarifies choices made in the process of the work. First, ontology is discussed and Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* is adopted as basic approach. Secondly, the interface between text and context is discussed. Quentin Skinner's contextual approach is basically adopted. Thirdly, the concept of situation in relation to interpretation is elaborated. Fourthly, the interface between text and reader is discussed to structure a framework for basically comprehending interpretations of Clausewitz. Fifthly, language and discourse are shortly elaborated. Finally, the aspect of interpretation as problem-solving and the criteria of novelty are discussed to motivate choices made.

A work of this kind is not a straight journey, but more of an 'intellectual effort' to ask the proper questions from evolving insights. However, I have kept four things in mind: strategy, centre of gravity, theoretical framing of military thought and Clausewitz's views. The work has been carried out in six parallel areas:

1. *Centre of gravity*, conducted as an initial study of contemporary interpretations, which served as the point of departure to construct a problem and purpose for the interpretation.
2. *Clausewitz's texts in German*: these needed to be identified and collected as no complete collection existed. I started by outlining a chronology and arranging the individual texts based on existing research. The initial result was developed and improved by considering every text in more detail.

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<sup>96</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Ed., Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 285. I also use Hans-Georg Gadamer *Hermeneutik I Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990)

3. *Construct a context* for the evolving chronology to further understand the points and meaning of the individual texts.
4. *Understand the German way of thinking* at the time. This was difficult. It includes among other things the challenge of sufficiently grasping contemporary language, philosophy and military discourse.
5. *Develop a theoretical approach* to the study of military thought.
6. *Comprehend and structure existing interpretations* of Clausewitz and strategy.

## ONTOLOGY

The first theoretical problem to ponder is the choice of ontological principle, which induces the focus of study. The post-modern challenge has more or less ruined the prospect of scientific objectivity; at least one can no longer neglect this aspect. The classic ideal of studying history and intellectual history was explained in a nutshell by Ranke as '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*'. That mode of historical enquiry, to recover and explain how it really had been in context, was developed as Historism. It presupposed objectivity from scientific honesty and investigation of the matter within the conditions of its time, underpinned by Kant's positive principle of general progress. To understand history was essentially to understand the development of morality. The mode of enquiry was clarified by the hermeneutical circle: to understand the parts from the whole and the whole from the parts.<sup>97</sup>

The purpose was to catch and objectively elaborate the individuality of human expressions, as Ranke's motto prescribed. But the ambition to make human science as hard as natural science evoked also a quest for larger truth by scientific generalisation on the principle of method so prosperous for natural science. The quote from Hans-Georg Gadamer above reflects a refutation of this modern quest. Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) was polemic to a unilateral belief in the attainment of truth from method in human affairs, since many human matters cannot be embraced by method alone. This is because they presuppose a moral attitude; they depend on context and judgement.

Note that the shortcoming of imitating scientific methods had been pinpointed earlier by for example Popper's critique of Historicism in a paper from 1936, published as a book 1957. His fundamental thesis was: 'that the belief in historical destiny is sheer superstition, and that there can be no prediction of the course of human history by scientific or any other rational methods...'<sup>98</sup>

Hermeneutics has long been a general term used to cover interpretation in qualitative research of human affairs in texts, works of art and historical events. From Hermes, the

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<sup>97</sup> As general references about hermeneutics, texts and interpretation I relay on Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Foreword by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Translated by Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Peter Szondi, *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*, Trans. By Martha Woodmansee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005 first 1997); Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: Routledge, 2003); Elisabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Texts Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)

<sup>98</sup> Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), ix

messenger of the Greek gods, come the words *hermeneuein* (to interpret) and *hermeneutike* (the art of interpretation). Aristotle's work *Peri hermeneias* or *On Interpretation* was one of the first accounts to systematically address logic and language. The Latin term *hermeneutica* resurfaced in common European language in the first part of the seventeenth century along with the rise of natural science.<sup>99</sup>

Early modern hermeneutics had a normative and methodological scope to avoid 'arbitrary' interpretations. It was considered a discipline auxiliary to other established ones such as philosophy, jurisprudence and theology, concerned with interpretations of texts and signs. As far as a statement was clear and self-evident it needed no interpretation. Hermeneutics was in that sense mediation when words and statements lacked evident clarity and relevance. The contemporary term is broader; it covers the theory of understanding and interpretation of both linguistic and non-linguistic utterances.

The classic matter of textual hermeneutic study was to recover the author's intention seen as an authority to recollect. Schleiermacher, the father of Romantic hermeneutics, outlined the task for the interpreter as to 'understand the discourse first as well as and then better than the author.'<sup>100</sup> Martin Heidegger objected to the possibility of the classic historicist hermeneutic ideal in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). His investigation made a turn from the subject matter towards the ontological conditions of the enquirer to solve the quest for objectivity that had bothered the human sciences. Heidegger regarded temporality and contemporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) as giving rise to history. All things have their particular place and time, which implied that all things have historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) and nothing is outside of history. The enquirer had consequently a certain place in history influencing his or her view of the matter.

Understanding was an existential concern for Heidegger. The world is tacitly intelligent to us, so enquiries are always framed by something pre-scientific that comes before the interpretative act. Heidegger explained this as the enquirer's 'fore-structure of understanding'.<sup>101</sup> From these propositions, Gadamer developed philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method*. As Heidegger's former student he chose to adopt the historicity of understanding as a positive and productive principle for new understanding. French postmodernist philosophy chose to develop the same notion in a more sceptical direction, which I will elaborate soon.

*Truth and Method* investigated the conditions of human understanding (*Verstehen*), while natural science sought to explain matter (*erklären*). Gadamer was interested in how human finitude conditioned understanding and argued for the need of a broader concept of truth in humanities not just related to proper method.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> 'Hermeneutics' in *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Ed. by Ted Honderich, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 380

<sup>100</sup> Schleiermacher cited in Grondin, Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics, 71

<sup>101</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Malden: Blackwell, 1962), see especially part IV and V.

<sup>102</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 1-3

His genuinely positive attitude to knowledge as well as the opinion of other people was reflected in his conception of hermeneutics as dialogue, explained in a seminar in 1989: 'The possibility that the other person may be right is the soul of hermeneutics.'<sup>103</sup> It was by conversation, to confront the ideas of others, that one could go beyond the narrowness of presupposition. He argued also for the universality of the hermeneutical problem to suggest a more general relevance of this philosophy of understanding.<sup>104</sup> To make a distinction, Heidegger developed a hermeneutics of life and his student a hermeneutics of texts.

Gadamer observed a fundamental difference between natural and human sciences in the fore-structure of understanding, as the opening quote above indicates. The social enquirer was in principle part of the investigation, which implied that the 'object in itself' did not exist in human sciences as in natural science. This means in principle that a 'true Clausewitz' is not feasible. We have to accept that studies are reconstructions rooted in the present rather than in the matter of the past. History as effect, *Wirkungsgeschichte*, was developed as an ontological principle to reflect this condition of understanding in human sciences.<sup>105</sup> Understanding was a time-conditioned event that took place in a particular hermeneutical situation and the enquirer was in principle part of the matter.

Gadamer argued, against the 'seduction of historicism', that the quintessence of interpretation was only to uncover the author's true meaning. Polemically he asked why so many competing alternatives could co-exist to indicate the interpreter's part in the interpretation. Gadamer suggested instead that the scope of study should be the text's history of effect in successive readings. At the same time he argued for the clear hermeneutical demand that a text should be understood in the situation in which it was written. Gadamer's approach to interpretation continued the tradition of humanism with a little twist. It has been criticized for the lack of a critical component, speaking of truth in a naïve way only supported by a unilateral belief in classic tradition. I will now continue to elaborate a second, more sceptical, pace from Heidegger.

*Being and Time* also clarified a task to '*destruieren*' the inherited history of ontology since the Greeks.<sup>106</sup> Heidegger regarded the basic concepts of philosophy as false, which steered understanding of all objects and hence all positive investigation. These concepts had to be genuinely demonstrated and grounded before scientific work could continue.<sup>107</sup> This view inspired a second way from Heidegger's work eminently developed in French postmodern philosophy, for example by post-structuralists such as Derrida and Foucault. Theories were 'monsters' to Jacques Derrida.<sup>108</sup> His approach

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 124

<sup>104</sup> Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical problem', in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Translated and Edited by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 3-17

<sup>105</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267-306

<sup>106</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 41

<sup>107</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 28-35

<sup>108</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *How to do theory* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 119

of deconstruction tried to expose and eliminate the frames of reference, assumptions, and ideological foundations of a text. Michel Foucault went so far that the author was eliminated as a relevant aspect of a text and with that the classic intentional aspect of textual interpretation.

Foucault called himself professor of 'the history and systems of thought'. His work addressed themes such as madness, discipline and punishment to elucidate a history of the 'politics of truth', which he linked to knowledge production and systems of power. His 'archaeology' investigated discourses and discursive formation, their governing rules rather than authorial genius or chronological aspects. To investigate the system of knowledge, the control of discourse related to power and desire was essential to Foucault, for example in the principles of classification, aspects of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>109</sup>

History should not rewrite what the sources said; instead what the subsequent discourse rewrote. Foucault tried to kill the concept of 'man' as he did with the concept of 'author', since social science had never discovered a human essence. He used de-familiarization of past phenomena as a distancing technique to illustrate that things could be categorized differently in past time. The approach of 'archaeology' was later substituted with Nietzsche's concept 'genealogy', which better conveyed the practice of linking power, knowledge and institutional forms.<sup>110</sup> The humanist study of the individual was in this form of inquiry substituted by uncovering grand formative underlying structures of knowledge and the quest for power that steered knowledge production.

Basically, postmodern philosophy has much to offer the student of military thought. But the focus of this study is actually Clausewitz, with much to offer in spite of risking 'corrupt formative structures' in between. I have chosen the hermeneutical approach for my purpose aware of the postmodern critique. The present work adopts Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* as an ontological principle to overcome the theoretical problem of temporal distance and remote categories. This study focuses not on the subsequent reading of Clausewitz, instead on his texts in the line of the traditional study of intellectual history.

From this follows that interpretation of Clausewitz's text is rooted in the present but with a positive undertone. Temporal distance does not ruin the possibility to say something interesting about strategy based on these texts. As interpreters we have the possibility to see things in another way and are more informed than the originator, at least in principle. The structure and context suggested in this interpretation is a present construction and certainly not fully reflective of the way Clausewitz perceived matters.

However, Gadamer clarified and handled this ontological matter wisely. It is enough to say that the present reconstruction is my own and not 'exactly Clausewitz' even though he speaks through his texts. The post-modern quest for formative intellectual

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<sup>109</sup> See for example Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Translated by A.M. Seridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002, first in French 1969)

<sup>110</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Texts*, 113-19

destruction runs the risk of dead end after the 'corrupt' is uncovered. Therefore my basic scientific conviction is that hermeneutics and Gadamer's more positive approach have much to offer the student of military thought but need the complement of critical awareness.

## INTERFACE TEXT AND CONTEXT

The second theoretical aspect to ponder is the interface of text and context, mostly seen as an evident and important relation but refuted by post-structuralists. The rise of postmodernism and subsequent literary theory made the interface of context and text problematic. The pre-critical concept of texts as solid, concrete and authoritative was under attack. Derrida argued for example that contexts cannot be certainly determined or saturated. The determining of a context was never politically neutral, innocent and without interest, since 'there is nothing outside of context'.<sup>111</sup>

Foucault and Derrida argued consequently that the text must be liberated from the author to avoid ideological presupposition. The choice of context was not objective but an act by the interpreter to guide the meaning of a text. Post-structuralists regarded the author's intended meaning as out of reach and even irrelevant. The single meaning of a text was also refuted. The reader gave significance to the text, which implied that every interpretation should offer a multiple interpretation according to different aspects of readers. I have written this study with the student of strategy in mind and offer no alternatives because that would make the study too long.

Quentin Skinner has clarified and developed the traditional approach to interpreting historical political texts, which conveys my purpose well. His approach to interpreting remote political thought benefits from the use of context.<sup>112</sup> Skinner regarded the recovery of authorial intention with the help of context as doable and relevant, as opposed to post-structuralism philosophy.<sup>113</sup> His theoretical standpoints were developed as counter-arguments to older Anglophone approaches in the history of ideas. These suggested the classic texts contained 'dateless wisdom' in the form of 'universal ideas' independent of their context. Further, the text should be read as a present piece to overcome alien moral and political standards.

According to Skinner the scholar's task was, instead, to locate the world of thought available to authors in their time and place so as to reveal the values, questions and contexts of the past. Skinner rejected the notion that political theorists investigate perennial problems and ideal types, since such models hardly exist: this standpoint fits the study of military thought as well. He always regarded ideas as weapons and tools in the political language of particular historical periods:<sup>114</sup> 'The primary task must therefore be that of trying to recover a very precise context of presuppositions and other beliefs, a context that serves to exhibit the utterance in which we are interested

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<sup>111</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Texts*, 131-45

<sup>112</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol 1. Regarding Method (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>113</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 90-102

<sup>114</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 57-89

as one that was rational for that particular agent, in those particular circumstances, to have held to be true.’<sup>115</sup>

Skinner’s contextualism and employment of speech-act theory as a linguistic model have been criticized in terms of, for example, Derrida’s standpoints on the subjectivity of choosing context.<sup>116</sup> Gadamer rehabilitated however prejudice (*Vorurteil* ‘fore-judgement’), which has been seen in previous hermeneutics as something to overcome. These sentiments were an inevitable condition for the fore-structure of understanding, but also productive for better or for worse. They represented a substantial difference from, for example, Derrida’s critique of the use of context. From the concept of hermeneutical situation, it followed that interpretation was always application and not just recollection of innocent facts. Interpretation was driven by a purpose to establish, to improve or to argue for something particular rooted in the fore-structure of understanding.

Gadamer’s ontological principle recognized Derrida’s criticism in a way but circumvented the consequence by adopting this principle as a positive condition for acquiring new knowledge. Thus a frequent application in Clausewitz’s interpretations was to disprove the ruling paradigm of military thought and suggest a truer way of thinking strategy. His propositions were not just a product of apt processing of intelligent unbiased observation, but by and large timely weapons in military discourse in a manner that resembled Skinner’s view of political thought. Therefore the recovery of context is important for understanding Clausewitz’s ideas.

Important interpretations of Clausewitz that have emphasized the role of context in understanding Clausewitz’s military thought are Rothfels’s *Krieg und Politik* (1920), Paret’s *Clausewitz and the State* (1976) and Gat’s *A History of Military Thought* (2001). Interpretations downplaying the role of context are Schering’s *Die Kriegsphilosophie von Clausewitz* (1935) and Aron’s *Den Krieg Denken* (1980). It is clear that the former group was more interested to recover Clausewitz’s original meaning within his context. The latter two scholars were more interested in explaining universal concepts and structures clearly aimed at their present according to the ideal ‘good for all time’.

I have adopted the following standpoints for this work. Contemporary context in the manner of Skinner’s approach is indispensable for recovering Clausewitz’s way of thinking strategy. However the interpreter undoubtedly has a powerful possibility to steer, at least to a certain extent, the projection of a message by selecting and combining text and context. I think this is inevitable, based on the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. This condition should however be seen as a positive possibility to say something interesting about strategy based on Clausewitz’s observations and standpoints.

Many previous interpretations have paid too little attention to Clausewitz’s evolving military thought and tend to mix his standpoints regardless of their temporal situation. The conditions for Clausewitz’s military thought were simply different in 1804 and 1827, as I will now continue to elaborate theoretically.

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<sup>115</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 42

<sup>116</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Texts*, 140-45



## SITUATION

The third theoretical aspect to ponder is how interpretation takes place. Gadamer propounded understanding as an event that takes place in a particular situation, which induces a finite and temporal character of interpretation, often described as an individual experience. Philosophical hermeneutics took the standpoint that temporal distance was productive. The meaning of a text was not closed.<sup>117</sup> The particular significance was instead open for scrutiny, making new meaning continually possible in new situations.

Older hermeneutics had viewed temporal distance as an obstacle to establishing the author's true meaning in a work. Gadamer suggested instead that the reader had primacy over the originator on the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which circumvented the problem of original true meaning. But new understanding was not superior on principle, only different: 'Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better, either in sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas or in the sense of fundamental superiority of conscious over unconscious production. It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all*.'<sup>118</sup> To Gadamer this implied that every finite situation has limitations:

We define the concept of 'situation' by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of '*horizon*'. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.<sup>119</sup>

Horizon was a frequent term in German philosophy. To make a contemporaneous comparison for example Ernest Gombrich under Popper's influence used 'horizon of expectation' for the study of art defined as a 'mental set, which registers deviation and modifications with exaggerated sensitivity.'<sup>120</sup> Hans Robert Jauß influenced by Gadamer defined the same term for literature studies and reception theory as: 'a structure of expectations, a system of references or a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text.'<sup>121</sup>

Reinhart Koselleck elaborated *Erfahrungsraum* and *Erwartungshorizont*, i.e. space of experience and horizon of expectation, as two historical categories for understanding

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<sup>117</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 291-99

<sup>118</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 296 (italics in original)

<sup>119</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301

<sup>120</sup> E.H. Gombrich, *Art & Illusion A study in the psychology of pictorial representation*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (London: Phaidon, 1977)

<sup>121</sup> Cited in Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory A critical introduction* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 61

conceptual change.<sup>122</sup> His approach of *Begriffsgeschichte* or conceptual history relates to Skinner in the line of traditional intellectual history.<sup>123</sup> Koselleck regarded experience and expectation as having a meaning as general as time and space. These allowed for the construction of concrete fields of meaning, to schematize historical time in the past as well as in the future: 'Experience is present past in which the courses of events are merged and can be recollected. Rational processing as well as unconscious behaviours link up in experience, which must not be or not any longer present in knowledge.'<sup>124</sup> Thus, experience was a broad concept with personal as well as impersonal aspects of understanding.

The horizon of expectation was defined as a line with no exact borders that opens a new space of experience, which cannot be realized yet. Koselleck continued and expanded Gadamer's principle of historicity of understanding, which the title *Vergangene Zukunft*, i.e. *Futures Past*, reflected. Somewhat simplified the entry into a new space of experience implied that experience had less to tell about the future and was substituted by more expectation and vice versa in stable periods. The breakthrough of a horizon of expectation made new experience.

Applying these concepts to Clausewitz, the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars formed the horizon of expectation that influenced his early military thought. Later in writing *Vom Kriege* after 1816 when he more thoroughly tried to clarify war and how to think strategy properly, the campaigns of 1812-1815 that ended with Waterloo were his ruling horizon of expectation.

Consequently, Clausewitz's hermeneutical situation and range of vision in 1827 was indeed different from in 1804. As a young lieutenant in the thick of Napoleon's dominance he lacked access to the information, context and visible outcomes he had as an older major-general looking back to a clearer, more established space of experience. In addition, also somewhat simplified, his concerns were under threat more about real life problems to prevail, while the later concern were more about theoretical profoundness.

In the German tradition of hermeneutics a distinction was made between the concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, i.e. lived experience and experience. The first clear conception of this distinction has been attributed to Dilthey. *Erlebnis* was intimately connected to the process of understanding, further to the process of self-understanding in relation to others, in that sense a psychological aspect active in the

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<sup>122</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, 'Erfahrungsraum und Erwartungshorizont – zwei historische Kategorien', *Vergangene Zukunft Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, first 1979), 349-75

<sup>123</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); *Ibid.*, *Begriffsgeschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006)

<sup>124</sup> Koselleck, *Erfahrungsraum und Erwartungshorizont*, cf. 354. 'Erfahrung ist gegenwärtige Vergangenheit, deren Ereignisse einverleibt worden sind und erinnert werden können. Sowohl rationale Verarbeitung wie unbewußte Verhaltenweisen, die nicht oder nicht mehr präsent sein müssen, schließen sich in der Erfahrung zusammen.'

situation of interpretation. Derrida categorically refuted *Erlebnis* as a metaphysical concept.<sup>125</sup>

Gadamer analyzed the concept as: '*Erleben* means primarily "to be still alive when something happens." Thus the word suggests the immediacy with which something real is grasped – unlike something which one presumes to know but which is unattested by one's own experience, whether because it is taken over from others or comes from hearsay, or whether it is inferred, surmised, or imagined. What is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself.'<sup>126</sup>

It is obvious that Clausewitz's *Erlebnis* influenced his analysis of experience. If one tries to say exactly how it became speculation, it is enough that he put primacy on what he had experienced himself in theorizing in general. To give an example, the grand campaigns of 1812-1815 became a steering epitome to him even if he contextualized these with interpretations of older experience. I have briefly tried to portray his *Erlebnis* to indicate a foundation, and also to connect his actual situation to his texts so as to indicate a glimpse of his evolving analytical situation.

Political, ideological and moral conviction has a clear impact on military thought. Clausewitz argued for example against the conservative wing of the Prussian army that tried to preserve the old order in the political turmoil after the Napoleonic Wars. It is also apparent that military thought is crisscrossed by a multitude of interests, such as service rivalry, political and economic interests. My study of the American interpretations of centre of gravity clearly suggested a profound service mind-set to understand the concept and strategy in general. Taken together this suggests the importance of understanding currents of military thought to understand standpoints expressed. I have consequently striven for a chronological reconstruction of Clausewitz's propositions, which I think gives the best hint about problems, novelty and wider implications.

#### INTERFACE TEXT AND READER

The fourth problem to ponder is the interface between text and reader. Clausewitz would not have been remembered today if his readers had not continued to be interested, to admire and criticize his ideas. Readers and their interpretations form a literary *Wirkungsgeschichte* that reflects important aspects of subsequent military and political thought. This mode of enquiry into Clausewitz's ideas appeared in the 1970s.<sup>127</sup> It was influenced by postmodern literary theory, which has much to offer the

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<sup>125</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Texts*, 136-37

<sup>126</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 53-61, cf. 53

<sup>127</sup> See for example Ulrich Marwedel, *Carl von Clausewitz: Persönlichkeit und Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes bis 1918* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1978); Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Olaf Rose, *Carl von Clausewitz: Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes in Rußland und der Sowjetunion 1836-1991* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995); Stuart Kinross, *Clausewitz and America: Strategic thought and practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008); Benoît Durieux, *Clausewitz en France: Deux Siècles de Réflexion sur la Guerre* (Paris: Economica, 2008); Clausewitz Gesellschaft, *Clausewitz Goes Global: Carl von*

student of military thought in general.<sup>128</sup> The approach most clearly influenced by the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte* was reception theory as developed by for example Hans Robert Jauß and Wolfgang Iser of the Constance School. It was an attempt to deal with the deadlock in literature studies that the conflict of interpretation brought.

The aesthetics of reception (*Rezeptionsästhetik*) mediated literature in the larger courses of events. Jauß tried to bridge the gap between literature and history, further between historical and aesthetic recognition. Theoretically a triangle of author, work and public was depicted to illustrate that the latter had been undervalued in the study of literature. Consequently, following Gadamer, the authority of the author ceased when the work was handed over to the reader. The public was now to be understood as a historically formative energy not to be excluded from interpretation. Aesthetics and history were united by placing the perceiving subject in the middle.

Jauß described the aesthetic reception of a work as a continuum, like a chain, that influenced the understanding of later generations. The dialogue between work and public was a process that continually changed the horizon of expectation, creating new aesthetic norms of interesting and appealing aspects.<sup>129</sup> Even if understanding may be an event, the reading of Clausewitz in different ages has some typical features that are of interest for grasping contemporary standpoints. The present work has identified different spaces of experience according to the history of war to broadly categorize successive formative readings of Clausewitz.

‘*Wilhelmine military readings*’ of Clausewitz was his breakthrough and the foundation of later reading. It was conducted against the horizon of expectation constituted by the events of German unification of 1864-1871. Important aspects of context were Germany’s geostrategic dilemma squeezed between France and Russia, along with the rise of patriotism and modernism. An example of way-pointing interpretations was Colonel Wilhelm v. Scherff’s reading guide to *Vom Kriege* (1880). His reading tried to make the text as practical as possible.<sup>130</sup> This was seemingly a response to Jomini, who had labelled Clausewitz as unpractical and too negative about the prospect of military science.<sup>131</sup>

At the time, perhaps Colmar von der Goltz was the most widely-read and translated military writer. Goltz’s interpretations of Clausewitz were employed to support analysis of present military problems such as the development of the modern mass-

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*Clausewitz in the 21st Century*, Ed. Reiner Pommerin (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles Verlag, 2011)

<sup>128</sup> For a general overview see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction*, Anniversary Edition (Malden: Blackwell, 2008, first 1983). See also Wolfgang Iser, *How to do theory* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007)

<sup>129</sup> Holub, *Reception Theory*, 53-81

<sup>130</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Erläutert und mit Anmerkungen durch W. von Scherff, 4. Auflage (Berlin: F. Schneider & Co, 1880)

<sup>131</sup> Baron de Jomini, *Summery of the Art of War or, a New Analytical Compend of the Principal Combinations of Strategy, of Grand Tactics and of Military Policy*, Translated by Winship & McLean (New York: Putnam, 1854, first in French 1837), 14-15; See also Jomini, *Abrißs der Kriegskunst*, Translated and edited by Oberstleutnant v. Boguslawski (Berlin: Wilhelmi, 1881)

army in *Das Volk in Waffen* (1883), which was translated into six languages.<sup>132</sup> Graf von Schlieffen's preface to the fifth edition of *Vom Kriege* (1905) indicated the professional reading tone of *Vom Kriege*. Many of the ideas presented in the work had already become doctrine. But Schlieffen expounded especially the psychological dimension of the work emanating from 'Vernichtungsgedanke', the idea of annihilation, as a key for reading and of lasting importance to military men.

The lasting value of the work 'Vom Kriege' lays between its high ethical and psychological *Gestalt* in the insistent emphasis on the *Vernichtungsgedanke* [the idea of annihilation]. To Clausewitz, war is subordinated to 'one highest law of thought in the decision by arms'. To him 'the annihilation of enemy armed forces in reference to all purposes that can be followed in war appears as the one always outdoing all others'. This teaching has guided us since Königsgrätz and Sedan, but the idea itself relies on the experience of the great warlike era in the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>133</sup>

*Interwar readings* of Clausewitz were made according to the horizon of expectation constituted by the horror of the First World War. Important aspects of context were ideological confrontation and the rise of mechanized machine warfare. In the early 1920s Hans Rothfels projected as mentioned above the close relation between war and politics in Clausewitz's ideas, seemingly as subtle criticism of the German War Command. Lenin's and Alexander Svechin's interpretations observed the same relation, which influenced the early Soviet and Communist reading of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>134</sup> Liddell Hart's interpretations characterized otherwise, the decline and refutation of Clausewitz in this period, as the 'evil genius of military thought' and the 'apostle of total war'. His strategy of indirect approach was more or less a counter-doctrine to Clausewitz's idea of combat as conceptual fundament for the art of war.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Das Volk in Waffen* (Berlin: R.V. Decker's Verlag, 1883)

<sup>133</sup> Graf v. Schlieffen, 'Zur Einführung der fünften Auflage', in Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Fünfte durchgesehene Auflage (Berlin: Dümmler, 1905), III-IV. 'Der dauernde Wert des Werkes „Vom Kriege“ liegt neben Seinem hohen ethischen und psychologischen Gestalt in der nachdrücklichen Betonung der Vernichtungsgedankens. Für Clausewitz steht der Krieg unter „dem einen höchsten Gesetz der Waffenentscheidung“. Ihm erscheint „die Vernichtung der Feindlichen Streitkräfte unter allen Zwecken, die im Kriege verfolgt werden können, immer als der über alles gebietende“. Dieser Lehre hat uns nach Königsgrätz und Sedan geleitet, sie selbst aber fußte auf den Erfahrungen der großen kriegerische Zeit zu Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts.'

<sup>134</sup> W.I. Lenin, *Clausewitz' Werk 'Vom Kriege' Auszüge und Randglossen* (Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, 1957); Alexander Swetschin, *Clausewitz – Die klassische Biographie aus Rußland*, Hg. Olaf Rose & Hans Ulrich Seidt (Bonn: Dümmler, 1997 from the original Russian first edition 1935)

<sup>135</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Foch: The man of Orleans* (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1932); Ibid., *The Ghost of Napoleon*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), Ibid. *The Way to Win Wars: The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber, 1942). An assessment of L.H.'s view of Clausewitz can be found in for example Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart: A study of his Military Thought* (London: Cassell, 1977), 37-64; Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 128-43

Hans von Seeckt, chief architect and first commander of the *Reichswehr*, elaborated Clausewitz as a 'buzzword' hampering proper military understanding where he was quoted but not studied.<sup>136</sup> Erich Ludendorff regarded himself as a practical man who despised theory according to his apocalyptic interpretation of future war in *Der Totale Krieg* (1935). His response to the failure on the Western Front was escalation rather than political reason. Clausewitz was passé. Future war was of one kind and not diversified through politics as the philosopher had outlined. Future totalitarian war was the prime medium to decide on a people's right to exist. Politics had therefore to be subordinated to the military war effort.<sup>137</sup>

Clausewitz faded in German military thought – with a few exceptions such as Ludwig Beck.<sup>138</sup> He was instead regarded as 'mostly for professors', too philosophical to be practical.<sup>139</sup> Readings framed by National Socialism picked up the patriotic element in Clausewitz's texts and had mostly a clear political undertone, underpinning the notion of *Kampf* and national rebirth.<sup>140</sup>

*Cold War readings* of Clausewitz started from the horizon of expectation constituted by the Second World War and Hiroshima. Clausewitz transmigrated into the Anglo-American scholars' world and thence into the English-speaking military world. This way certainly influenced the new understanding of Clausewitz. The characterizing aspect was a frequent emphasis on political primacy over military command labelled as 'Clausewitz's dictum'. This became the key to unlocking Clausewitz's spirit in the nuclear age.<sup>141</sup>

Clausewitz's revival in West Germany was part of the grand long-lasting purification process after the world wars. Note in particularly Gerhard Ritter's study of German militarism's interpretations of Clausewitz (1954-1968).<sup>142</sup> Gerhuda Wallach's study of the German military dogma of *Vernichtungsschlacht* (1967) continued to investigate how Clausewitz had been made unsound doctrine in line with the Schlieffen quote above.<sup>143</sup> Hahlweg's important work to develop scholarly editions of *Vom Kriege* and

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<sup>136</sup> Hans von Seeckt, *Gedanken eines Soldaten*, Erweiterte Ausgabe (Leipzig: Koehler, 1935), 7-29

<sup>137</sup> General Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg* (München: Ludendorffs Verlag, 1935)

<sup>138</sup> Ludwig Beck, *Studien*, Edited by Hans Speidel (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1955)

<sup>139</sup> See General der Panzertruppe Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg's letter to Liddel Hart 3 August 1949 cited in *Die Wehrmacht. Mythos und Realität*, Hg. Rolf-Dieter Müller & Hans-Erich Volkmann (München: Oldenbourg, 1999), 313

<sup>140</sup> See for example the end of Schering, *Die Kriegsfilosohpie von Clausewitz*, 123-24

<sup>141</sup> Bernard Brodie, *War & Politics* (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1973), 2; Ibid, 'A Guide to Reading On War' in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976), 645; Gordon Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), xvii; Ibid. 'Delbrück: The military historian' in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 327; Michel Howard, 'British Grand Strategy in World War I' in Paul Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991), 31

<sup>142</sup> Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: Das Problem des Militarismus in Deutschland*, 4 Vol. (München: Oldenbourg, 1954-68)

<sup>143</sup> Jehuda Wallach, *Das Dogma der Vernichtungsschlacht: Die Lehren von Clausewitz und Schlieffen und ihre Wirkungen in zwei Weltkriege* (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1967); see

collecting Clausewitz's many texts was carried out according to this horizon of expectation.

*Contemporary Anglo-dominated readings* of Clausewitz are, somewhat simplified, performed according to the horizon of expectation constituted by the collapse of the Soviet Union, belief in military technological supremacy and drawn-out fragmentation of warfare by the 'small and poor'. I have already addressed in the Introduction the more specialized reading of Clausewitz: briefly the reading in general has been a debate about Clausewitz's continual relevance and the changing character of war.

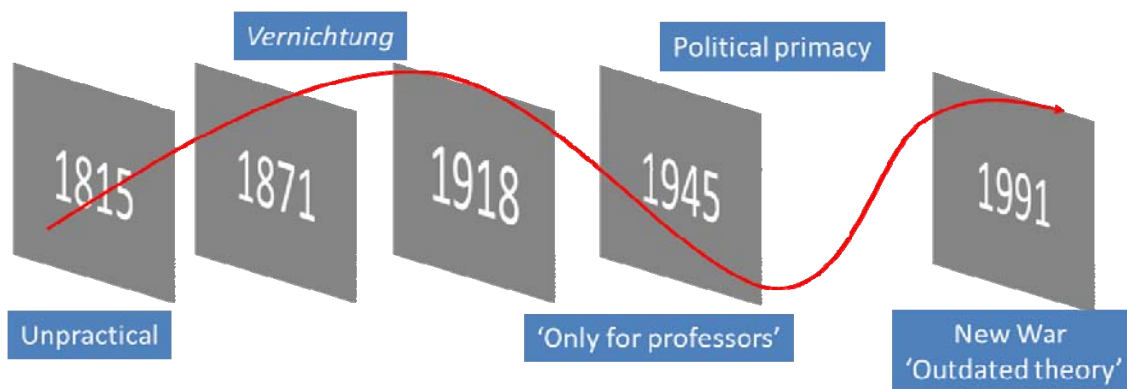


FIGURE 2 CLAUSEWITZ'S RECEPTION ACCORDING TO SUCCESSIVE HORIZONS OF EXPECTATION ABOUT WAR AND WARFARE.

It is evident that the reading of Clausewitz has evolved. The concern and interest have differed and so has the understanding of his work. Wolfgang Iser considered the act of reading, the interaction between the text and the reader, as an 'effect to be experienced' and not as an 'object to be defined'. The literary work was neither a text nor the subjectivity of the reader according to Iser; instead it was a merging of the two. He described areas for exploration to understand the production of meaning such as the text's potential for manipulation of meaning. Clausewitz was very kind to his readers in this aspect. The text was a skeleton of 'schematized aspects' to be actualized and concretized by the reader. Clausewitz's texts contain many complicated aspects with a complex structure, which permits the reader to concretize differently.

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also Herbert Rosinski, 'Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought', *Naval War College Review* 29 (1976), 83-103; ; Marwedel, *Carl von Clausewitz: Persönlichkeit und Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes bis 1918*; Werner Hahlweg, 'Das Clausewitzbild Einst und Jetzt', *Clausewitz, Vom Kriege*, 52-83; Martin Kitchen, 'The Traditions of German Strategic Thought', *The International History Review* I, No. 2, (April 1979), 163-190; *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, Edited by Michael I. Handel (Oxon: Frank Cass, 1986). See also a slightly different and nuanced interpretation in Antulio J. Echevarria II, 'Borrowing from the Master: Uses of Clausewitz in German Military Literature Before the Great War', *War in History* 3 (July 1996), 274-92; *Ibid.*, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2001)

Another area to explore concerned the act of processing the text. This was about forming mental images to construct consistent and cohesive aesthetic objects.<sup>144</sup> Two apparently constructed images from a study of Clausewitz are the German 'Vernichtungsgedanke' and 'the dictum of political primacy' as a response in Cold-War reading. This greatly simplified and broadly depicted literary map supports my understanding of the evolvment of Clausewitz-reading and how I have approached and evaluated other interpretations. The bibliography at the end of the work presents a selection of literature used in this process.

## LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE

Skinner and Koselleck continued the traditional study of intellectual history. The authorial intention was the goal for the scholar to investigate, but as part of the discourse of the intellectual community it was articulated. To explain action one had, according to Collingwood, 'to discern the thoughts' of the actor.<sup>145</sup> This implies an attempt to understand Clausewitz's motivation and reasons, what he tried to achieve and respond to. Skinner points to the recovery of 'primary intention', not every single intention; since multiple reasons usually underlie action. Further, Skinner urges one to think about what the agent was doing by saying as he did.<sup>146</sup>

Skinner investigated normative vocabularies. He contested the belief that intellectual historians should penetrate beyond the 'surface of ideological debate' to recover and study the perennial and unchanging political 'units of ideas'. This approach to Clausewitz would imply that we study his ideas to recover the proper military 'unit of ideas'. However Wittgenstein suggested in *Philosophical Investigations* that one should not think about the meaning of words in isolation instead comprehend them in particular 'language games'.<sup>147</sup>

This standpoint influenced Skinner's approach. He tried to elucidate concepts not from their supposed 'meanings' but by investigating their affiliations and relations in a wider network of beliefs.<sup>148</sup> Skinner's conclusion was: 'there cannot be a history of unit ideas as such, but only a history of various uses to which they have been put by different agents at different times. There is nothing, I venture to suggest, lying beneath or behind such uses; their history is the only history of ideas to be written.'<sup>149</sup> Koselleck's approach is similar. Concepts must be studied among other concepts on the web of ideas. Thus it is irrelevant just to recover the meaning of *Schwerpunkt*. The concept must be interpreted among Clausewitz's other concepts to understand relations, importances and hierarchies of his conceptual web.

Wittgenstein suggested that 'words are also deeds', which notion Skinner adopted. Language shapes understanding, but is also a valuable resource to shape the world.

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<sup>144</sup> See Holub, *Reception Theory*, 82-106

<sup>145</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 214-15

<sup>146</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 128-36

<sup>147</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, revised fourth edition (Malden: Blackwell, 2009)

<sup>148</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 6-7, 48-49

<sup>149</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 176



Language is not just a constraint, but also something positive and powerful to use. Skinner argued, contrary to postmodern conceptions of language, that political thought was articulated by people aware of what they were doing, who articulated their intentional standpoints in a discourse in their own community. His concept of discourse was not so far from Habermas' theory of communicative action. The concept of discourse presupposed a community of relatively autonomous actors with a common language. The discourse influenced the formation of political reality and vice-versa in a form of reciprocity.<sup>150</sup>

Skinner followed the tradition of social thought that stems from Nietzsche and Weber. This suggests that concepts alter over time, incapable of more than presenting a series of changing perspectives of our world. We employ concepts to make sense of it and change fosters the ideological debate. Skinner argued that this falsified every attempt to fix scientifically-correct moral standpoints and ideals in the flux of politics. Concepts were what one could do with them in argumentation. Like Gadamer, he regarded all ideas as historical, even the most abstract ones, and this certainly reflects Clausewitz's military thought as well. Both Skinner's and Koselleck's research pointed to the 'need to treat our normative concepts less as statements about the world than as tools and weapons of ideological debate.'<sup>151</sup> A standpoint that fits military thought as well.

Skinner's defence of his approach to studying the individual, the text in the time frame of context, and discourse, is a good response to the criticism emanating from post-structuralism. He suggested – inspired by Foucault's elaboration of power – that no one stands above the intellectual battle. The postmodernist enquirer cannot assume a position outside of discourse. Discourse is endless and the only object of enquiry.

There is also much to be learned from reflecting on what we uncover when we begin to investigate the texture of moral, social and political thinking as it was actually carried on in the past. We encounter endless disputes about the application of evaluative terms; we witness continual struggles to win recognition and legitimacy; and we gain a strong sense of the ideological motivations underlying even the most abstract systems of thought. We find, in short, that philosophical argument is often deeply intertwined with claims to social power... One [implication] is that the principles governing our moral and political life have generally been disputed in a manner more reminiscent of the battlefield than the seminar room... A further and connected implication is that it may be right to view with a certain irony those moral and political philosophers of our own day who present us with overarching visions of justice, freedom and other cherished values in the manner of dispassionate analysts standing above the battle. What the historical record strongly suggests is that no one is above the battle, because the battle is all there is.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 127-28

<sup>151</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 176-77

<sup>152</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 6-7

It is perfectly clear that Clausewitz's observations and elucidation of war and strategy were a reaction to the shortcomings of the ruling viewpoints in contemporary military thought. He was also an ambitious man, aware of his gift. He returned frequently to the poverty of other military writers, some more than others, which makes it easy to see his ideas as weapons in the Prussian military discourse. Skinner finally refuted all attempts to legislate on the 'correct' use of normative terms, because these always reflected a wish to impose a moral vision on the workings of the social world.<sup>153</sup>

Gadamer, too, noted that interpretation presupposed a moral attitude. War and military matters perhaps evoke more feelings than other subjects. The strong emotional impact of defeat and victory, the right or wrong in the use of force, has a clear subjective bearing. Defeat seems to have frequently evoked an interest in Clausewitz's ideas to inspire rethinking and reforms. I have already mentioned the close relation of military thought, especially in the realm of strategy, to political and moral thought. Gadamer used Aristotle's concept of knowledge in conjunction with the notion of common sense, *sensus communis*, to make a point on why the different classical aspects of knowledge matter in human science:

The Aristotelian distinction refers to something other than the distinction between knowing on the basis of universal principles and on the basis of the concrete. Nor does he mean only the capacity to subsume the individual case under a universal category – what we call 'judgement'. Rather, there is a positive ethical motif involved that merges into the Roman Stoic doctrine of *sensus communis* [common sense]. The grasp and moral control of the concrete situation require subsuming what is given under the universal – that is, the goal that one is pursuing so that the right thing may result. Hence it presupposes a direction of the will – i.e., moral being (*hexis*). That is why Aristotle considers *phronesis* an 'intellectual virtue'... Although practicing this virtue means that one distinguishes what should be done from what should not, it is simply not practical shrewdness and general cleverness. The distinction between the proper and the improper thus presupposes a moral attitude, which it continues to develop.<sup>154</sup>

I have followed Skinner and not tried to sanitize Clausewitz's sometimes very alien military, political and moral standpoints. On the contrary I think these are of great value to remind us that structures of values and knowledge in military thought are always more or less in flux. Further, military thought is not performed in a clinical vacuum and a white coat if we accept Gadamer's and Skinner's standpoints. It is therefore better to comprehend military concepts and propositions with a hint of their context and their relations.

Koselleck had a slightly different approach to Skinner's. He analysed discourse not just to reconstruct earlier political thought, but over a long period to recognise political and social structures. He investigated basic social and political concepts to map a history of conceptual change in Germany between 1750 and 1850. His ambitious project was the

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<sup>153</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 182-87

<sup>154</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 19-20

entire process of conceptual change, while Skinner focused on the techniques with which it took place.<sup>155</sup> Koselleck has much to offer about the tenets of the conceptual world in Clausewitz's time.

Language has always been a major concern for interpretation, clearly visible in the historical record of hermeneutics. A major feature has been the belief that one may uncover hidden genius and spirits in texts; make the alien understandable again. Gerhard Eberling (1912-2001) distinguished three senses of the older term *hermeneuein* as expression (utterance, speaking), explication (interpretation, explanation) and translation (acting as an interpreter). To interpret, the two latter have been merged into contemporary language so as to carry unfamiliar sounds into familiar language.

Jean Grondin observed that two fundamental senses of *hermeneuein* remain today – expressing and interpreting. The Greeks regarded speaking as *hermeneuein*, as the translation of thoughts into words. In expression the spirit moved outwards to be knowable and the point to penetrate an utterance was to see the conceived spirit. An utterance (*hermenia*) was always a translation of the soul's (inner) thought into externalized language. *Hermeneutike* had in Plato's writings a sacred and religious function: to display a type of knowledge that an interpreter could not determine as true or false. This interplay, mediation, of outer and inner dimensions was picked up by later hermeneutical approaches.<sup>156</sup>

Another interesting aspect of interpretation refers to language as *interpretatio* (repetition of thoughts) and the experience of unintelligibility. When the literal word could not be understood or was not appropriate it induced re-interpretation. Stoic philosophy was the first to employ allegorical re-interpretation of valuable myths. This practice was about mediation, to find and interpret the hidden value in literary texts that was improperly judged against prevailing norms. To discover the hidden meaning was to unlock the text, which was a hermeneutical effort to make the meaningless intelligible. The Stoic term *Hyponoia* carried the meaning of indirect communication; one said one thing in order to make something different understood. This can be compared with Scherff's interpretation of *Vom Kriege* (1880), which suggested that the articulation of defence as the strongest form of war was just a philosophical trick to illuminate the strength of attack.

Language has also been a major concern in the understanding of Clausewitz, at least for non-native German readers. *Vom Kriege* has been translated into about 30 languages. Three different translations have been made to convey the work into English. The latest by Paret and Howard (1976) was observed for its smooth and accessible English, which also was a major reason for the Clausewitz-boom in the English speaking world. However, this translation has also been criticized in later years, as briefly addressed in the Introduction. Translation is also interpretation indeed, and this one has to my mind some signs of a Cold War reading of Clausewitz.

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<sup>155</sup> See a further comparison in Kari Palonen, *Quentin Skinner History, Politics, Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003)

<sup>156</sup> Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 20-22

Clausewitz frequently used the term '*kriegerisch*' (occurs about 233 times in *Vom Kriege*), which is mostly translated as 'military' instead of 'warlike'. The choice of word depends on the meaning one attributes to the word in context and on what point one wishes to make. In fact war involving the whole populace was a matter of concern for Clausewitz rather than war as a fixed military pattern. This suggests that the awkward term 'warlike' is more appropriate than 'military' with its clear modern connotations.

*Politik* was used in a set of meanings, which encounter trouble in the English distinction of policy and politics. Translation suggests war as a continuation of policy with a rational sensible undertone. But this was only one part of the meaning Clausewitz had in mind. He also viewed *Politik* as a process of fermentation that could generate reckless war among other things. To indicate this variation I will frequently use the German term *Politik* to signal this broader meaning.

Clausewitz often used words with irony and as subtle criticisms in small 'language games' that must be recovered if possible in context. A literal translation easily loses the topical point. Clausewitz was a lover of long sentences, which are difficult to translate into readable English without violating his structure. The modern translation often changes the original structure of sentence to make sense in English, which depends on the translator's interpretation of the point made. Clausewitz was fairly consistent in his use of words, while the translation often employs different words. This makes careful studies of his language structure difficult indeed.

Turning to specific words, for example *Geist*, i.e. spirit, occurs about 246 times in *Vom Kriege* having numerous different meanings. The word originates from the Latin *spiritus*, but even German dictionaries have characterized the word as ambiguous, which suggests a sometimes more complex meaning than the first obvious one. Adelung's *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (1796) suggested eight main meanings and a wide set of sub meanings.

Basically '*der Geist*' had the meaning of wind (*der Wind*) and in a wider sense breath (*der Athem*) or light touch, breathe, gossamer (*der Hauch*) related to the Greek *pneuma* and to the Hebrew *Rauch*. Further it meant also among other things a way of thinking (*Denkart*), essence or temper (*Wesen*), power of movement (*Bewegungskraft*), the simple substance that makes people astute (*Scharfsinn*), living power (*Lebenskraft*) and the core of matter (*Kern*).<sup>157</sup> Contemporary literary works that contributed to the meaning of *Geist* were for example Montesquieu's *Vom Geist der Gesetze*, (1748) and Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807).

Language is also the framework for thought. Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy suggested that inner processes have a need for outward criteria to make sense. Earlier hermeneutical tradition suggested likewise the mediation of inner and outer aspects to interpret meaning and significance. Clausewitz's way of thinking differs somewhat from what the structure of English can offer. Even if one studies his text in the original

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<sup>157</sup> Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 2 (Leipzig: 1796), 512-15. [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/Adelung-1793/A/Geist,+der?hl=geist> accessed 23 July 2012

German is it obvious that contemporary categories and values are remote from those by which Clausewitz thought.

To make sense and establish one line through the entire work I found it necessary to follow the original texts only. I have consequently chosen to translate all quotes according to the meaning I understand from the particular context and to supply the original German text in a footnote. I was inspired by the re-translation of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* by Hacker and Schulte, which displays the original text along with the translation. My purpose is to provide as close a translation as possible and to minimize the potential shortcomings of being a native speaker neither of English nor German. Language and translations is checked by a professional company.<sup>158</sup>

I have as far as possible used Adelung's dictionary *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* published 1792-1801 as reference. When needed, this work has been supplemented by other dictionaries as close to Clausewitz's time as possible, all derived electronically from the Zeno full-text-library of older German text.<sup>159</sup> Bibliographical data were obtained electronically from *Deutsche Biographie* and *Neue Deutsche Biographie*.<sup>160</sup>

#### PROBLEM-SOLVING AND NOVELTY

I have depicted the tension between traditional hermeneutics and the post-structuralist view of science. Gadamer was interested and used words such as truth, understanding, tradition and continuity. Post-structuralists such as Derrida preferred to look for ruptures, non-understanding and formative, almost evil, structures that worked behind discourses. I have chosen hermeneutics and a contextual approach because I think they convey my purpose best.

R.G. Collingwood attacked positivist historical interpretation in a set of lectures in 1936 published posthumously in 1946.<sup>161</sup> He thought that the historian's present situation must be taken into consideration, a view that can be compared to Heidegger's. Too many historians used the 'cut and paste method' to copy well-known work into their own without doing anything more with the sources. Collingwood attacked the understanding of history as the study of the 'dead past' that just awaited the historian's classification, so he suggested that history should instead be problem-solving and question-oriented. For Collingwood, all history was thought. Positivist historians claimed they worked with facts, while Collingwood argued that evidence was made evidence by the interpreter.<sup>162</sup> This study has been conducted with these standpoints in mind.

Georg Iggers in his overview of twentieth-century historiography pondered the question of whether the 'Linguistic Turn' implied the end of history as a scholarly

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<sup>159</sup> Entry address <http://www.zeno.org>

<sup>160</sup> Entry address <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/index.html>

<sup>161</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966)

<sup>162</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Texts*, 108-10

discipline.<sup>163</sup> I follow Koselleck's standpoint that history is more than just fiction even if the writing includes elements of that kind also.<sup>164</sup> In that sense, Clausewitz is not just poetry as Bruce Fleming suggested in his thought-provoking interpretation.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand Clausewitz had hardly any vision that his more detailed ideas would be literally employed after one or two hundred years.

Gadamer suggested a 'fusion of horizon' as a positive learning motive for interpretation. This was derived from the logic of question and answer. We can ask different things of a text, which implies different answers. Further, understanding occurs when for example Clausewitz's remote and alien horizon meets ours in a kind of dialogue between different times to inform and provoke us to reflect about how we think. This is not to say that the past was better or more informed, on the contrary as elaborated previously. Skinner's method relied on projecting a contrast between past and present. In that sense Clausewitz's ideas should provoke us so we can reflect and learn from the contrast. Consequently the purpose of this study is not to make Clausewitz's ideas conform to our own values and problems. His range of vision and way of thinking was simply different from ours and that is precisely what gives it merit.

Skinner suggested novelty as a criterion for a new scholarly work. A new work must be a reinterpretation; otherwise it does not qualify for publication. Historical novelty implies rewriting or revision of the phenomena investigated. The criterion of novelty must be set in relation to Skinner's view of 'truth':

I am convinced, in short, that the importance of truth for the kind of historical enquiries I am considering has been exaggerated...Take for example...Machiavelli's fervently held belief that mercenary armies always jeopardize political liberty. Perhaps there is nothing to stop us from asking whether this is true. But the effect of doing so will be somewhat analogous to asking if the king of France is bald. The best answer seems to be that the question does not really arise.<sup>166</sup>

Skinner's view was rooted in the Weberian style of truth dependent on perspective in human sciences. Koselleck suggested three approaches to rewriting history: new sources, new modes of reading them and new perspectives on interpretation.<sup>167</sup> Reconstruction and integration are classical hermeneutical tasks, which have underpinned this study. I have striven for novelty by as far as possible working through

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<sup>163</sup> Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, cf. 118

<sup>164</sup> Reinhart Koselleck interviewed by Hasso Spode, 'Ist Geschichte Fiktion?', *Die Zeitschrift der Neuen Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Folio*, 03 (1995) [Online version] URL: <http://www.nzzfolio.ch/www/d80bd71b-b264-4db4-afd0-277884b93470/showarticle/dd30ca32-4681-4eb3-994b-c36fe565dd49.aspx> electronically accessed 9 April 2012.

<sup>165</sup> Bruce Fleming, 'Can Reading Clausewitz Save us From Future Mistakes?', *Parameters* (Spring 2004), 62-76

<sup>166</sup> Skinner cited in Palonen, *Skinner*, 1-2

<sup>167</sup> Compared in Palonen, *Skinner*, 2

Clausewitz's German texts instead of translations and interpretations. The perspective, approach and result of the present work modify the state of research as far as I know.

### 3. SCHARNHORST'S APOSTLE

#### DISCONNECTED VISIONS AND REALITIES

What pathetic chop-and-change most strategic reasoning is! A says he must operate according to x against the capital of the enemy; God forbid says B, he must operate against y so as to cover his own capital. This point must be attacked says C, because is it not obviously the weakest? Yes it is the weakest say D, but what matters is the annihilation of the enemy power [army], therefore one must seek him out where he is and fight a great battle – and so it goes on for ever and ever, and when the gentlemen are done no-one is any the wiser, and not the tiniest result has appeared. Methinks it is as if the *Kriegskunst* is speaking to us: *Pursue the largest most decisive purpose you can achieve* [according to available means], *choose the shortest way there that you dare to take*.<sup>168</sup>

This could be from a discussion about centre-of-gravity in our time, but it is an excerpt from Clausewitz's notebook on strategy 1804. He appears to have caught a perennial problem for military command quite well: how to estimate what is right at a particular moment to make and select a viable course of action that has the potential to achieve the desired effect. In that sense Clausewitz did not differ from any other young officer. He thought his senior colleagues were wrong and could not make up their minds. Anyway, the passage depicts in a nutshell what Clausewitz basically tried to straighten out later in *Vom Kriege*: a commonly accepted vantage point, a platform from which to envision and evaluate strategy. Here the first lieutenant in him speaks; a youngster who simply sees the straightforward solution: seek out the highest, most decisive purpose that is possible to achieve according to the correlation of forces. This resembles the head-on approach to strategy as epitomized by the rising General

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<sup>168</sup> Clausewitz [1804], *'Strategie'*, *Schriften* (1979), 19. 'Welch ein erbärmliches Hin- und Herreden ist das meiste strategische Raisonement! A sagt, er muß nach x operieren gegen die feindliche Hauptstadt; Gott bewahre, sagt B, er muß nach y operieren, so deckt er seine eigene Hauptstadt. Diesen punkt, sagt C muß man angreifen, denn ist er nicht offenbar der Schwächste? Ja er ist der schwächste, sagt D, aber es kommt darauf an, die feindliche Macht zu vernichten, darum muß man sie da aufsuchen, wo sie ist, und einen großen Schlag tun, - und so geht es bis in Ewigkeit fort, und wenn die Herren fertig sind, so ist jeder so klug wie vorher, und nicht das aller kleinste Resultat kommt zum Vorschein. Mich dünkt, es sei also, daß die Kriegskunst zu uns redet: *Gehe dem größten, entschiedensten Zweck nach, welche du zu erreichen, wähle den kürzesten Weg dazu, den du zu gehen dich getraust.*'



Bonaparte in the western mighty France, however at the time only vaguely known from the newspapers.

Clausewitz was brought up in a poor middle-class family from the Magdeburg-Halle region, with protestant values and a lifelong claim to noble status. His father Friedrich Gabriel served as *Fähnrich* in the Seven Years' War but had to retire in 1767 and work as a civil servant. He collected taxes for a minor salary. His mother Friedrike Schmidt came from a civil-servant family. The couple had two daughters and four sons. Carl was the youngest boy, born on 1 July 1780.<sup>169</sup> His grandfather was a theologian and worked at the university in Halle. The family was really so poor that Clausewitz had to enter the Prussian infantry before his twelfth birthday, in the spring or early summer of 1792, to earn his own living. This was not an exceptional early age at this time.<sup>170</sup> Six months later in January 1793 young *Junker* Carl marched with his brother to the front at the Rhine.

He saw action for the first time in summer 1793 and in July he was promoted to *Fähnrich* with the honourable task of carrying the banner. Socially the young Clausewitz was raised between the educated and the military worlds, and also between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. This period has been sufficiently covered by Paret so I will start when Clausewitz arrived in Berlin in 1801 for higher military education.<sup>171</sup> This chapter elucidates briefly Clausewitz's military *Bildung* under Scharnhorst's supervision. It also depicts the tensions he perceived between the theoretical visions and practical realities, politically as well as militarily, that terminated in the disastrous defeats at Jena and Auerstedt in October 1806, Bonaparte's pursuit and the roll-up of Prussia's remaining defence that more or less caused the implosion of old Prussia. The chapter ends at New Year 1807 with Clausewitz's first testimony about the on-going tumultuous events.

## MILITARY BILDUNG IN BERLIN

*Leutnant* Clausewitz started higher military education in September 1801 at the *Lehr-Anstalt für junge Infanterie- und Kavallerie-Offiziere in den militärischen Wissenschaften* in Berlin.<sup>172</sup> Gerhard von Scharnhorst (1755-1813) was at the same time appointed inspector of military education and executive director of the institute. A couple of months later he also became head teacher for Clausewitz's three-year course, lecturing foremost on the *Kriegskunst*.<sup>173</sup> Scharnhorst had served in the

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<sup>169</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, xi

<sup>170</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 19 n.19

<sup>171</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 13-55

<sup>172</sup> Gottlieb Friedlaender, *Die Königliche Allgemeine Kriegsschule und das höhere Militär Bildungswesen 1765-1813* (Berlin: Mittler, 1854), 214

<sup>173</sup> See on Scharnhorst: Georg Heinrich Klippel, *Das Leben des Generals von Scharnhorst*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Brochhaus, 1869-71); Max Lehmann, *Scharnhorst*, 2 Vols (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886-87); Sigfrid Mette, *Vom Geist Deutscher Feldherren Genie und Technik 1800-1918* (Zürich: Scientia, 1938), 35-88; Ernst Hagemann, *Die deutsche Lehre vom Kriege I Von Berenhorst zu Clausewitz* (Berlin: Mittler, 1940), 20-43; Reinhardt Höhn, *Revolution Heer Kriegsbild* (Darmstadt: Wittich, 1944); Rudolf Stadlemann, *Scharnhorst Schicksal und Geistige Welt Ein Fragment* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1952); Reinhardt Höhn, *Scharnhorst. Soldat – Staatsmann – Erzieher*, 3rd Ed. (München:

Hanoverian army until May 1801, when he entered Prussian service. He had distinguished himself in the unsuccessful campaigns of the First Coalition 1793-1795 against the French Revolutionary Army in the Netherlands.<sup>174</sup>

Scharnhorst has been described as an untypical officer; educated, pragmatic and politically aware with a profound interest in his profession from a broad perspective. He seems to have been rather boring as a teacher, at least from a first impression. But he was a warm person, interested in his students and took care of them, which compensated for any prolix lectures. In addition he was a prolific military writer on a variety of subjects, widely known for his *Militärisches Taschenbuch* on practical problems for regimental officers, written in the field in 1793.<sup>175</sup> He was a far-sighted developer of artillery, both technically and tactically, spotting the rising importance of combined arms formations for mobile warfare, as well as the close integration of artillery, infantry and cavalry in battle. He was also the founder and editor of *Neues militärisches Journal*, which addressed issues of the contemporary art of war.<sup>176</sup>

The French Revolution spread fear as well as hopes in Europe. The political and military change it initiated was sometimes beyond comprehension. The advantages and disadvantages of a standing army were debated; a problem previously addressed by Machiavelli and in an English debate during the seventeenth century. Scharnhorst wrote an analytical piece on new conditions for soldiering as early as in 1792.<sup>177</sup> Later he published an even more penetrating article on the reasons for French success in the Revolutionary Wars, with the fresh experience of the campaign of 1794 in mind.

In this piece Scharnhorst observed that misfortune in war was mostly explained by pinpointing some coincidence. Others' success was mostly attributed to surrounding conditions. He argued on the contrary that the continual misfortune of the coalition forces, comprising five to six armies during five years and ten campaigns, could hardly be explained as a coincidence, or by military mistakes, or faulty political directives. The reasons for French success must have lain deeper, and he traced them to the political order and internal conditions of the defeated states. Scharnhorst observed on one

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Verlag für Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und Technik, 1981); Heinz Stübig, *Scharnhorst Die Reform des preußischen Heeres* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1988); Charles Edward White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (Westport: Praeger, 1988); Klaus Hornung, *Scharnhorst Soldat-Reformer-Staatsmann Die Biographie*, 2nd Ed. (München: Bechtle, 2001, Heinz Stübig, *Gerhard von Scharnhorst – preußischer General und Heeresreformer* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009)

<sup>174</sup> The French Revolutionary Wars were a series of conflicts (1792-1802) between the French Revolutionary Government and several European states. The series of conflicts is usually separated into the Wars of the First Coalition (1792-1797) and the Wars of the Second Coalition (1798-1802).

<sup>175</sup> G. Scharnhorst, *Militärisches Taschenbuch zum Gebrauch im Felde* (Hannover: Helwing, 1793)

<sup>176</sup> See *Neues militärisches Journal* Bd 1-6 (1788-93) and under the name *Militärische Denkwürdigkeiten unserer Zeiten, inbesondere des französischen Revolutions-Krieges* Bd 8-13 (1797-1805) [Online version]; URL <http://www.ub.unibielefeld.de/diglib/aufkl/neumiljour/index.htm> accessed 14 June, 2011

<sup>177</sup> Gerhard v. Scharnhorst, 'Ueber die Vor- und Nachtheile der stehenden Armeen' in *Neues militärisches Journal*, 6 Vols (1792), 234-254

hand the French revolutionary 'enthusiasm' for their cause, which enabled them to wage war with the whole nation. In contrast the coalition lacked animation and its forces were employed piecemeal.<sup>178</sup>

Friedrich the Great (1712-1786) had developed the Prussian Army into an efficient military machine, which he commanded in person by short instructions. His successor had not the same political and military talent. Prussia and its army stagnated not least due to unclear responsibilities in the administration. The unsuccessful military effort in the Revolutionary Wars indicated this. Prussia decided to end the military struggle against the Revolutionaries, stay neutral and to leave the alliance, in effect from the Peace of Basel in April 1795. This provoked a drawn-out military discourse about military change and the true *Kriegskunst*. Later, around 1827, Clausewitz explained this continual misfortune as a result of a poor political analysis of the revolution, which had framed strategy improperly.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, his later coining: think strategy as war is a continuation *Politik*.

The dynastic army consisted largely of foreign-recruited troops that had very little in common with the people of Prussia. This was not entirely bad at times because the troops constituted a reliable tool for internal security in the absolute state, not at least in revolutionary times. However, this military tradition also kept defence and military matters a purely professional interest for the military and political elite, which lacked public interest. This political condition of war Clausewitz later labelled '*Kabinettskrieg*', to be seen in relation to public, animated war labelled '*Volkskrieg*'. This later, very apposite, conceptual distinction was, however, not so clearly spelled out at this time, coming as it did in the midst of the events that brought change. Scharnhorst had many ideas on military reforms when he entered Prussian service in 1801.

Clausewitz's education was poor when he arrived in Berlin in 1801, seemingly to the extent that he found it difficult to follow lectures. But Scharnhorst helped him to overcome the initial problems, which seemingly initiated their special relation. Scharnhorst's aim was to educate military students so that they could assume a broad array of positions in the army, by fostering independent military judgement and responsibility.<sup>180</sup> In 1804 the institute was renamed *Akademie für junge Offiziere*. The term 'academy', popular in the spirit of the Enlightenment, seemed really to convey Scharnhorst's military pedagogical approach better than the former rather rigid term '*Anstalt*'.

Strategy was an intellectual activity intimate to the Great Captains and to the command of armies. However the Prussian army was suffering from a lack of

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<sup>178</sup> Gerhard v. Scharnhorst, 'Entwicklung der allgemeinen Ursachen des Glücks der Franzosen in dem Revolutionskriege, und insbesondere in den Feldzügen von 1794', *Neues militärisches Journal* (1797), VII-154. Reprinted in Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 47-110

<sup>179</sup> See chapter 13

<sup>180</sup> See Scharnhorst [*Denkschrift* ? Um 1801?], 'Ohne Bildung der Officiere in der Kriegskunst kann der Staat keine gute Ausführung von seinen Armeen erwarten.', *Private und Dienstliche Schriften* Vol 3/6, 300-28

competent commanders and stagnant military institutions.<sup>181</sup> The point of the general staff was to form a coherent and competent thinking organisation, at least in theory, to assist the aging commanders to perform. To think right or at least in the same way was intended to improve organisational performance. The education was in broad terms organized according to Scharnhorst's military *Bildungsprinzip* to enable junior officers to assist their senior commanders in solving the manifold problems of warfare, which he explained as:

When an officer of the *Generalquartiermeisterstab* [predecessor to the General Staff] has received a good military *Bildung* in peacetime, he will soon be useful in all branches of the profession in war; but without a good military *Bildung* in peacetime the officer of the *Generalquartiermeisterstab* will never perform anything first-rate in war. Because this will require a *gebildete Beurteilungskraft* [educated and cultivated power of judgement] and a large store of subject matter cultivated from many enquiries of military rebukes, which must be made present to us from history, where one in all recurrent cases can fairly evaluate the resemblance of circumstances for the success of an enterprise and the flaws spotted by experience, be aware – when correlating all particular circumstances to rate and select the most conducive possibility from a great number. At this point nothing is more dangerous than one's own experience [cf. *Erlebnis*] without using the experience [in general] the history of war offers us. The few occasions of this personal experience are exactly at this point adopted as a yardstick and all similar [enterprises] will be evaluated according to this, although a large variety of circumstances and results arise here.<sup>182</sup>

Somewhat simplified, after the Napoleonic Wars Clausewitz was to continue and develop his mentor's view of '*gebildete Beurteilungskraft*': to think right, sophisticatedly; and to speak as clearly as he could about the endemic military problem of constructing strategy and selecting viable courses of action. We should bear the general staff aspect in mind when we think about Clausewitz's later work. At

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<sup>181</sup> Walter Görlitz, *Der Deutsche Generalstab: Geschichte und Gestalt 1657-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte, 1950), 31-90

<sup>182</sup> Scharnhorst, [1804] about experience and theory, cited in Stadelmann, *Scharnhorst*, 155-56; reprinted in Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 149. 'Wenn der Offizier vom Generalquartiermeisterstab in Friedenszeiten eine gute militärische Bildung erhalten hat, so wird er im Kriege in kurzer Zeit in allen Fächern brauchbar sein; aber ohne eine gute Bildung in Friedenszeiten wird nie ein Offizier vom Generalquartiermeisterstab im Kriege etwas Vorzügliches leisten. Denn es wird eine durch viele Untersuchungen militärischer Vorwürfe gebildete Beurteilungskraft und ein großes Magazin von Tatsachen, die aus der Geschichte uns gegenwärtig sein müssen, erfordert, wenn man in allen Vorkommenden Fällen aus der Ähnlichkeit der Umstände den Erfolg einer Unternehmung einigermaßen beurteilen und die Fehler, welche die Erfahrung aufgedeckt hat, vermeiden will – wenn man alle die besonderen Umstände zu Rate ziehen und unter den mancherlei Möglichkeiten die zuträglichste wählen will. Nichts ist hier gefährlicher als eigene Erfahrung ohne Benutzung der Erfahrung, welche die Kriegsgeschichte uns darbietet. Die wenigen Fälle dieser eigenen Erfahrungen werden nun zum Maßstab genommen und nach diesen werden alle ähnlichen beurteilt, da hier doch einen groß Mannigfaltigkeit der Umstände und der Resultat eintritt.'

this point it is not too much to say that his later work was intended first to inform general staff officers, commanders and then, even further, politicians and governmental administration on how to think and evaluate strategy from a similar vantage point. He will tell us later about this. Thus *Vom Kriege* had one root in Scharnhorst's view of military *Bildung*, which included a particular aspect of military self-education similar to what Clausewitz developed later in Book 2. The officer should take due responsibility for his own intellectual cultivation.

Koselleck has elaborated the close relation of *Geist* and *Bildung* as two concepts for cultural innovation in this age dominated by the tenet of freedom. Mozart was used to exemplify this. It was (and still is) widely known that language is not enough to capture visual arts and music. Mozart had the innovative musical ability to surprise and at the same time every composition was a harmonious whole. Surprise and perfection walked hand-in-hand, which made him a genius of music free from his paragons. *Geist* and *Bildung* originated from theology but became closely related to work and genius.

During the Enlightenment *Bildung* became a pedagogical concept that implied individuality as well as hard work, self-realization without losing contact with society. Tradition should be absorbed but not determine the course of *Bildung*. The earlier strict religious aspect transmigrated into secularized devoutness and was replaced by the Kantian moral canon of duty. As outlined in Chapter two on language, *Geist* had many connotations that depicted vague but important qualities; not least since the word faintly implied God in everyday language.

However, Koselleck explained *Geist* as a concept covering the process of the self-realization of humanity in man. The advocates of *Aufklärung*, i.e. the Enlightenment in that way foiled all political and religious institutions.<sup>183</sup> Military *Bildung* was thus about the cultivation of the individual power of military judgement, but also about absorbing the moral canon of duty in military virtues that ultimately meant being ready to sacrifice oneself in combat. Clausewitz explained in his 1804 notebook on strategy what military *Bildung* was about, for the cultivation of commanders:

Very little knowing and much practical training of the [strategic] power of judgement, very few single abstract truths and many views intimately bound up with the *Geist*, which he often cannot separate from himself anymore, as the philosophers would say: little matter but much *form* in thinking [cf. to think right]. And how do you give the *Geist* this form? In continual interaction with history! So a general must be a learned researcher into history? God forbid! He should have studied it, he should in their interaction have wrestled strongly with it; whether he knows historical data or not is inessential indeed.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Koselleck, 'Geist und Bildung - Zwei Begriffe Kultureller Innovation zur Zeit Mozarts', *Begriffsgeschichten*, 155-58

<sup>184</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie - 3 Eigenschaften eines Feldherren', *Schriften* (1979, 6-8, cf.8. 'Sehr wenig Wissen und viel Übung der Urteilskraft, sehr wenig einzelne abstrakte Wahrheiten und viel dem Geiste innig verbundene Ansichten, die er oft nicht mehr von sich selbst zu unterscheiden weiß, kurz, wie die Philosophen sagen würden: wenig Materie, viel Form des Denkens. Und wie gibt man dem Geiste diese Form? Im steten Umgang mit der Geschichte!

So military *Bildung* was very little concerned with general abstract truths; instead with the fostering of the individual power of strategic judgement. It was about learning to think right about the diversity of military problems one could face in the line of duty. It was not about prefabricated military solutions or eternal truths, but about cultivating those personal military qualities in command that were, at least partly, beyond language. Military command in war had after all been labelled the art of war by Machiavelli. Clausewitz used the term *Kriegskunst* as a higher structuring concept for *Strategie* and *Taktik*, i.e. strategy and tactics. I will dwell more on these concepts later in this chapter.

Notably related to *Bildung* and *Geist*, Scharnhorst was some years later described by Clausewitz as: ‘*der Vater und der Freund meines Geistes*’.<sup>185</sup> That meant simply the caring intellectual father who had cultivated Clausewitz’s spirit, the one who had taught him to think right on his way to military self-realization. At this time the intellectual impact of Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) ‘philosophical revolution’ was massive. His three critiques, of *Reinen Vernunft* (*Pure Reason* 1781/87), *Praktischen Vernunft* (*Practical Reason* 1788) and *Urteilkraft* (*Judgment* 1790, 93, 99), can be compared to his schemata of our higher faculties.<sup>186</sup>

The whole spiritual faculty ( <i>Gesamte Vermögen des Gemüts</i> )	Cognitive faculty ( <i>Erkenntnisvermögen</i> )	A priori principles ( <i>Prinzipien a priori</i> )	To be used on
Cognitive faculty ( <i>Erkenntnisvermögen</i> )	Reason ( <i>Verstand</i> )	Regularity to fundamental laws of thought ( <i>Gesetzmäßigkeit</i> )	Nature ( <i>Natur</i> )
Feeling of comfort and discomfort ( <i>Gefühl der Lust und Unlust</i> )	Power of judgement ( <i>Urteilkraft</i> )	Purposefulness ( <i>Zweckmäßigkeit</i> )	Art ( <i>Kunst</i> )
Desire faculty ( <i>Begehrungsvermögen</i> )	Rationality ( <i>Vernunft</i> )	Final purpose ( <i>Endzweck</i> )	Freedom ( <i>Freiheit</i> )

FIGURE 3 KANT’S SCHEMA OF THE SOUL’S HIGHER FACULTIES (*DER OBEREN SEELENVERMÖGEN*)<sup>187</sup>

Anyone who has studied Clausewitz, especially in German, can fairly easily spot parts of Kant’s schema in his ideas. The power of judgement, the primary cognitive faculty cultivated by military *Bildung*, was situated between reason and rationality (or practical reason). It was to be used on art and thought according to individual

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Also ein gelehrter Geschichtsforscher muß ein General sein? – Gott behüte! Er soll die studiert, er soll seinen Geist in ihrem Umgang stark gerungen haben; ob er die einzelnen Geschichtsfacta noch weiß oder nicht, ist sehr unwesentlich.’ (my emphersize)

<sup>185</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Nancy 28 January 1807, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 82-85, cf. 85

<sup>186</sup> I use the German scholarly and anniversary edition *Philosophische Bibliothek - Die Drei Kritiken* (1993). Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*; Ibid. *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*; Ibid., *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993)

<sup>187</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, 36 (my emphasis)

purposefulness. This conveys Clausewitz's view of the *Kriegskunst*, as we will see. Politics was in Kant's schema related to several aspects, for example to rationality and the moral canon rooted in the concept of freedom. Later, writing about friction, Clausewitz labelled feeling, thus intuition, as a higher military power of judgement. The young militarily *gebildete* Clausewitz continued to elaborate the requirements of commander's faculties in the notebook on strategy 1804 as:

Much greater are the demands to be placed upon the character and natural faculties of a field commander than those on his scholarliness. As to intellect he must possess excellent powers of apprehension, rapid overview, clarity of *Vorstellungen* [way-pointing ideas with a pictorial element], proper power of judgment [*richtige Urteilskraft*]: as to character he must be exceptionally fearless, composed, of firm will, cold-bloodedness, ambition or, in a word, he must have a strong upward-striving soul. Cunning and steadfast activeness are qualities I for my part would wish him.<sup>188</sup>

These standpoints should be understood as part of contemporary military discourse, in which some suggested that the conduct of war was a science that could be mastered by reason. In addition, the origins of Great Captains were discussed from such widely divergent aspects as talent alone or just a question of proper education. In Kant's scheme scientific work did not share faculty with the power of judgement, even if the two intermingled, which Clausewitz also recognized when he later conceptualized theory *per se* for military thought. The Kantian ontological standpoint of the individuality of art as a matter of taste was, for example, faintly elaborated in a note about the '*Geist of the Kriegskunst among the Swiss*'.<sup>189</sup>

Clausewitz's elaboration above included one aspect very important for grasping his future ideas. This was 'clarity in *Vorstellungen*' intimate to the purpose of his later writings and way of theorizing. *Vorstellung* requires an explanation. According to the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, *Vorstellung* signifies 'putting forward' similar to representation or idea. However it is a mental image, picture or concept produced from previous perceptions of an object or objects, seen as a contrast to sensation, intuition and perception, which require the presence of the factual object. By

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<sup>188</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie – 3 Eigenschaften eines Feldherren', *Schriften* (1979, 6-8, cf.8 'Viel größer sind die Forderungen, welche man an den Charakter und die natürlichen Fakultäten eines Feldherrn zu machen hat, als die an seine Gelehrsamkeit. Von Seiten des Kopfes muß er vorzüglich leichte Fassungskraft, schnellen Überblick, Deutlichkeit in seinen Vorstellungen, richtige Urteilskraft, von Seiten des Charakters muß er vorzüglich Unerschrockenheit, Gleichmut, festen Willen, Kaltblütigkeit, Ehrgeiz, oder mit einem Worte, er muß eine starke emporstrebende Seele haben. – List und beständige Regsamkeit sind Eigenschaften, die ich ihm für mein Teil hinzuwünsche.'

<sup>189</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie – 6 Geist den Kriegskunst bei den Schweizern', *Schriften* (1979, 10-12

comparison *Vorstellung* always includes a pictorial element not required in an idea. The former is more subjective and the latter more objective.<sup>190</sup>

Melin's dictionary of terms in critical philosophy, 1804, outlined a much longer explanation, to the effect that a *Vorstellung* cannot be defined completely since it is intimate with other *Vorstellungen*, thus like a web. Further, the temporal aspect was observed since *Vorstellung* was bound up with inner life such as feelings and desires. A *Vorstellung* depicted a time-framed subjective reality, since it was made from recognitions modified by our individual higher spiritual faculty. Recognition of an object (*Erkenntnis*) had a more objective connotation than *Vorstellung*. The problem of 'dunkle Vorstellungen' was also elaborated, and implied unclear, obscure, vague ideas similar to those experienced when sleeping and which can be compared to Clausewitz's statement above.

Melin portrayed how our limited knowledge of the world made the field of 'dunkle Vorstellungen' the largest of them all. A tiny ray of light from recognitions could only illuminate small spots of the true world. Mankind was partly trapped in a play of 'dunkle Vorstellungen'. This was a consequence of Kant's way of philosophising the fundamental distinction of object and subjective appearance.<sup>191</sup>

Clear *Vorstellungen* was very important to Clausewitz for efficient military thought. For example, his two later seminal introductory texts to Book 1 outlined what he labelled *Grundvorstellung*. This was his subjective mental image of war at the time of writing derived from his earlier perceptions of experience. The first was written presumably in 1817-1823, and he had to revise it in 1827. These texts were constructions to set an intellectual attitude for the rest of the work. The pictorial element here depicted war as e.g. an 'erweiterter Zweikampf', i.e. an extended duel; further, as the physical fighting between two wrestlers. Nowadays, as I described in the Introduction, we regard the latter revised text inserted as Chapter one of Book 1 as his main contribution. But at the time it was just a text to set the right intellectual parameters and tone for the rest of the work. I return to this dilemma later.

Kant turned around the intellectual perspective to start a Copernican revolution in thinking. He argued that one should start from the assumption that objects must conform to our knowledge, instead of asking how our knowledge could conform to objects. Only then could one say anything intelligent about *a priori* knowledge, which could be stated prior to experience. Kant stipulated a distinction in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1780/87) between the noumenon as the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) and the phenomenon as the thing appearing to myself (*Erscheinung*). The thing-in-itself was not accessible to the human mind, but it supplied raw material for our cognition to

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<sup>190</sup> 'Vorstellung' in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Edited by Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, new edition 2005), 950

<sup>191</sup> 'Vorstellung' in Georg Samuel Albert Mellin, *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der kritischen Philosophie*, Vol 6 (Jena & Leipzig: Friedrich Fromann, 1804), 59-72



be arranged according to categories of time, space, cause-effect, unity, diversity and so on by our faculties.<sup>192</sup>

One should bear in mind that Kant's aim was to make philosophy a respected science like mathematics. Philosophy in that sense was also applicable to Clausewitz's understanding of the word: he later clearly pinpointed a line where reasoned theory on the *Kriegskunst* transmigrated into individual power of judgement. Kant, philosophy and logic were taught to Clausewitz in Berlin by Professor J.G.C. Kiesewetter (1766-1819). He appropriated the Königsberger philosopher's difficult texts and made them more accessible.<sup>193</sup> Logic was part of philosophy and used propaedeutically, thus preparing and pre-training for scientific work.<sup>194</sup> Kiesewetter's work on logic pointed to an important aspect in this sense by explicating *Denkart*, i.e. the way of thinking. Clausewitz objected to the discourse that thought of war as a general concept and not as changing interaction. Kiesewetter taught:

Reason can be a source of errors, if one does not think oneself into the position of others. This is the concern of the power of judgement. We can only thereby learn to distinguish the objective from the subjective of our recognition, by projecting ourselves into the position of others and not just observing the subject matter from our point of view but also from others'. If we do not frame the enquiry in this way we risk making a one-sided judgement, and thereby fall into error. One labels a person who lacks this extended way of thinking [*Denkart*] as narrow-minded. We find enough examples of error that flow from this source.<sup>195</sup>

Clausewitz was to take this view to heart. To think strategy as multi-sided interaction would become his trademark for avoiding the trap of one-sided accounts that dominated military discourse. In retrospect German philosophy did distinguish between *Denkart* and *Denkungsart*. The mode of thought (*Denkart*) determined the way one adopted laws of thought (*Denkgesetze*). The way of thinking (*Denkungsart*)

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<sup>192</sup> For interpretations see Peter Baumanns, *Kants Philosophie der Erkenntnis Durchgehender Kommentarer zu den Hauptkapiteln der „Kritik der reinen Vernunft“* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997); Anthony Kenny, *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 275-90

<sup>193</sup> See for example Johann Gottfried Karl Christian Kiesewetter, *Immanuel Kant's Kritik der Urtheilskraft für Uneingeweihte auf eine fassliche Art dargestellt* (Berlin: Wilhelm Oehmige, 1804)

<sup>194</sup> See a good elaboration about logic and Kiesewetter in Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 21-54

<sup>195</sup> Johann Gottfried Karl Christian Kiesewetter, *Grundriß einer allgemeinen Logik nach kantischen Grundsätzen*, Vol 2/2 (Berlin: Ligade, 1796), 204. 'Der Verstand kann Quelle von Irrthümern werden, wenn er sich nicht an die Stelle jedes andern denkt. Dies ist das Geschäft der Urtheilskraft. - Wir lernen das Subjektive unserer Erkenntnisse nur dadurch vom Objektiven unterscheiden, daß wir uns in die Stelle anderer versetzen und den Gegenstand nicht bloß aus unserm eigenen, sondern auch aus ihrem Gesichtspunkt betrachten. Stellen wir also diese Untersuchungen nicht an so laufen wir Gefahr, einseitige Urtheile zu fällen, und dadurch in Irrthum zu verfallen. Man nennt einen Menschen der diese erweiterte Denkart nicht hat, einen bornierten Menschen. Wir finden Beispiele von Irrthum genug, die aus dieser Quelle fließen.'

explicated the way one thinks intimately to the conditions of life.<sup>196</sup> It is perfectly clear that Clausewitz's *Denkungsart* was somewhat different in times of despair in comparison to calm times of reflection. But he strove all the time to think right, thus to establish a proper *Denkart* of strategy that stipulated laws of thought on truthful conditions.

Clausewitz graduated in spring 1804, rated as number one by Scharnhorst; closely followed by his gifted friend Carl Ludwig v. Tiedemann (1777-1812).<sup>197</sup> Both were Scharnhorst's favourite pupils and Clausewitz received a very good written appraisal: 'An unusually correct judgement of the whole, a humble and pleasing presentation characterizes the work of L. v. Clausewitz. Furthermore he possesses a thorough knowledge of mathematics and of the science of war.'<sup>198</sup> Many of Scharnhorst's lecture notes have been preserved, which gives a hint of what Clausewitz's education was about.<sup>199</sup> In addition a few of Clausewitz's tactical exams are preserved.<sup>200</sup> When Clausewitz became a teacher at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* 1810-11 he interpreted Scharnhorst's lecture notes in his own lectures on tactics and small war.<sup>201</sup>

Scharnhorst was encouraged to take responsibility for a new military society in July 1801.<sup>202</sup> The *Militärische Gesellschaft* was officially founded on 24 February 1802, the anniversary of Friedrich the Great's death. The date was cleverly selected to connect tradition with the problem of contemporary military change. Scharnhorst's approach was to mediate the past with the present and not throw tradition away. The list of members was more or less a list of who-was-who in the Prussian Army.<sup>203</sup> Clausewitz was accepted as member number 50 in 1802 and in April 1804 was appointed editor of the society's journal *Denkwürdigkeiten der Militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*.<sup>204</sup>

The first paragraph of the society's constitution was instructive regarding Scharnhorst's way of military *Bildung* as well as his ambition to mediate conflicting views in the discourse and establish a better common professional view of the *Kriegskunst*. 'The purpose of the society is: to exchange standpoints in all areas of the *Kriegskunst* in a learned manner; since this encourages the search for truth: the

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<sup>196</sup> Friedrich Kirchner, & Carl Michaëlis, *Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Grundbegriffe* (Leipzig, 1907), 139. [Online version]; URL <http://www.zeno.org/Kirchner-Michaelis-1907/A/Denkart/+Denkungsart> accessed 1 June 2010

<sup>197</sup> Scharnhorst, Denkschrift Berlin 29. November 1803, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 143

<sup>198</sup> Scharnhorst, Denkschrift Berlin 11. January 1804, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 150

<sup>199</sup> Scharnhorst, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 300-644, see esp. 387-509

<sup>200</sup> Clausewitz [Berlin 3. December 1803], 'Auflösung der 26ten Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1966), 57-8. In addition at least one short test from January 1803 remains non-published in Münster University Archives according to Hahlweg.

<sup>201</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11], 'Meine Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg, gehalten auf der Kriegs-Schule 1810 und 1811. – Artillerie. Geschütze.', *Schriften* (1966), 208-599

<sup>202</sup> Scharnhorst to his wife Klara, Berlin 24 July 1801, in *Scharnhorsts Briefe*, Hg. Karl Linnebach (München: Müller, 1914), 230-34

<sup>203</sup> White, *The Enlightened Soldier*, Appendix 3

<sup>204</sup> See Scharnhorst, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 705

difficulties, as well as the slightest possible one-sidedness of private study (cf. Kiesewetter above) can so be obviated, and appear as the most appropriate to put theory and practice into a proper relation.’<sup>205</sup>

The ongoing military discourse had many loud voices, eager to pin down precise rules for the conduct of modern war. Scharnhorst at this point was on the contrary reluctant to fixate any theory of the art of war *a priori*. The many conflicting views blurred professional understanding, according to Clausewitz’s later analysis. Scharnhorst’s ambition was to put theory in a proper relationship to military practice, which also reflected his student’s later ambition. Clausewitz’s performance at the institute made him adjutant to Prince August of Prussia (1779-1843) who commanded a grenadier battalion stationed in the capital. This position was fortunate for Clausewitz, since it led to his meeting Marie Sophie von Brühl at a dinner in December 1803.<sup>206</sup> She was *Oberhofmeisterin* to Prince Wilhelm of Prussia (1783-1851), a brother of the king.

Despite Scharnhorst’s profound and extensive military writings, he never wrote a coherent piece on strategy. According to Clausewitz, he preferred to teach this part orally, but had planned to write a text on ‘*Krieg und Kriegführung*’ in 1811. This, however, was postponed due to other more urgent duties.<sup>207</sup> The problem of interpreting Scharnhorst’s way of military thinking was later clarified in retrospect by Clausewitz as:

Had not a glorious death snatched him [Scharnhorst] away from an even more glorious life, his final literary work would surely to a certain extent have embodied his merits regarding a theory of war and everything would have been visible. The final part of his revised work on artillery would have been enough for that. In this he intended to teach the use of this weapon in the field, mainly by example as was his wont. As this weapon nowadays is so closely joined with the other two [cavalry and infantry] and plays so large a part in all kinds of combat, he was induced to include the entire teaching of combat [*Gefechtlehre*] in his subject matter, and because he was in the middle of his pet field here, he tackled this work with body and soul and the fullness of his heart. Most of the material was already collected and is now secured in his *Nachlaß*, though it would be difficult to joint these workpieces together without the master builder, as his thinking is too original, he took on things that had very little in common with the way of others, so one must fear, even though one has the entire material, that the soul, the formative idea is still missing.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> ‘Auszug aus der Verfassung und den Gesetzen der Militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin nach der Revision im Januar 1803’ in *Denkwürdigkeiten der Militärischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin, Neudruck der Ausgabe Berlin 1802-1805*, Vol1/5, Edited Joachim Niemeyer (Osnabrück: Bilblio, 1985), Anlage I §.1: ‘Der Zweck der Gesellschaft ist: durch wechselseitige Mittheilungen in allen Zweigen der Kriegskunst auf eine Art zu belehren; welche, indem sie zur Erforschung der Wahrheit ermuntert, die Schwierigkeiten, so wie die leichtmögliche Einseitigkeit des Privat-Studiums vermeiden läßt, und am besten geeignet zu seyn scheint, Theorie und Praxis in das richtige Verhältnis zu setzen.’

<sup>206</sup> See Marie’s note about her youth and family in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 175-95

<sup>207</sup> Hagemann, *Die Deutsche Lehre Vom Kriege*, 21-22

<sup>208</sup> Clausewitz [March 1817], ‘Leben und Charakter von Scharnhorst’, *Schriften* (1979), 205-50, cf.232-33

Clausewitz pinpointed the interpretative problem of grasping Scharnhorst's formative ideas and originality out of many texts. This description also caught fairly well the problem for later generations to interpret his work, which consisted of many workpieces. Gneisenau wrote strikingly in 1823 about the relation of the three: '...You were his, Scharnhorst's John [the Baptist, Johannes in German], I was only his Peter [Petrus in German]; never unfaithful however, as one is to one's master.'<sup>209</sup> Clausewitz was in that sense Scharnhorst's apostle, an evangelist of a new military-political testament. The latter's originality in thinking, analysing and teaching the *Kriegskunst* was nested in a belief in historical evidence. Strategic thinking was simply best learned by wrestling with historical examples to cultivate the power of judgement.

Note that deductive results and theory were never intended as a substitute for individual proper judgement in the field of practice. In conclusion, it is reasonable to interpret Clausewitz's later work as a continuation of Scharnhorst's approach to military *Bildung* and his military ideas, but with his own intellectual twist.

#### DISCONNECTED POLITICAL VISIONS AND REALITIES

The French Revolution started when Clausewitz was nine and the violent aftermath rumbled across Europe until he was a colonel and thirty-five. Looking back in 1817 he characterized the chaotic time between the fall of the Bastille in 1789 and Waterloo in 1815 as the greatest *politischer Umschwung*, political changeover of all time.<sup>210</sup> These political realities had a profound impact on warfare and consequently also on his theorizing on strategy. The French Revolution had evoked hopes for leaving the dynasties behind and moving towards a more equal and free society in the form of republics. At the time a dichotomy of *Politik* was present in the understanding of the concept. Theoretically *Politik*, somewhat simplified, was from one point of view power - *Gewalt, Macht, Kraft* - in the style of Machiavelli. From another point of view *Politik* was about the 'highest political good' nested in Kantian ethics. This ideal nurtured perpetual peace among peace-loving republics according to the teachings of moral right, the *Rechtslehre*.

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<sup>209</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz 15 July 1823 cited in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Bd. 5 (1880), 488

<sup>210</sup> Clausewitz [March 1817], 'Leben und Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979) 205-50, cf. 207. 'Hätte ihn [Scharnhorst] nicht ein ruhmvoller Tod einem noch ruhmvolleren Leben entrissen, so würde in seinen letzten schriftstellerischen Arbeiten sein Verdienst um die Theorie des Krieges sich gewissermaßen verkörpert haben und Allen sichtbar geworden seyn. Der letzte Theil seiner umgearbeiteten Artillerie allein würde dazu hinreichend gewesen seyn. In diesem wollte er den Gebrauch dieser Waffe im Felde lehren, und zwar, wie er immer that, hauptsächlich in Beispielen. Da nun in neueren Zeiten diese Waffe mit den anderen beiden so genau verbunden ist, und einen so großen Antheil an den Gefechten aller Art hat, so führte ihn dies dahin, die ganze Gefechtslehre in seinen Gegenstand hinein zu ziehen, und da sich hier recht in seinem Lieblingsfelde befand, so that er es mit Lust und Liebe und mit der Fülle des Geistes. Die meisten Materialien waren bereits gesammelt und finden sich wohl in seinem Nachlasse, aber es dürfte dennoch schwer seyn, diese Werkstücke ohne ihren Baumeister zusammengefügen, denn sein Denken ist zu originell, er nahm die Dinge zu wenig auf die Art der Anderen, so daß man befürchten muß, wenn man auch das ganze Material hat, immer noch die Seele, den bildenden Gedanken zu verfehlen.'

*Politik* as power had been theorized by Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527). Clausewitz read the Florentine's texts repeatedly in his twenties, probably at Scharnhorst's suggestion, and found them very instructive to his problems at that time.<sup>211</sup> Machiavelli had conceptualized politics and war as two types of related art for the ruler; the art of governing and the art of war. In *The Prince* (1513/32) he outlined coolly the art of governing (*Regierungskunst* also *Staatskunst* in German) by recommending the political ruler pragmatism separated from moral and religious considerations to stay in power.<sup>212</sup> At some time during his first year in Prussia Scharnhorst clarified the intimacy of *Politik* in terms of statecraft and the *Kriegskunst* in the style of Machiavelli. He analysed Napoleon's strategy in the Italian theatre in May-June 1800 right up to the victory of Marengo, which produced splendid success. The text was probably the draft of a speech, perhaps in the early time of *Militärische Gesellschaft*.

The experience of all time has proved that in all enterprises where the political intention and military possibilities, where the calculation of resources for war and the judgement concerning the correct employment of these – in a word, where *Politik* and *Kriegskunst* are not intimately united with one another – great things have seldom come to pass. I recall here this harmony at Noaille and Graf von Sachsen in 1746, 47 and 48, with Duke Ferdinand, with Frederik II and, conversely, the more recent incidents at Choiseul & Broglie in 1761. Where the Secret Cabinet proceeds only according to purely basic military Grundsätze (precepts), it will set to work equally wrongly as if in its political enterprises it were guided not by thorough knowledge of military conditions and military considerations. Here both must always be united. This was the strength of the French during the Committee of Public Safety and as long as Carnot was one of the 5 directors. This object is very important for the wellbeing and the preservation of the state.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Hagemann, *Die Deutsche Lehre vom Kriege*, 118

<sup>212</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Regierungskunst eines Fürsten* (Hanover & Leipzig: Schmidt, 1756); Niccolò Machiavelli, *Das Buch vom Fürsten*, Hg. Reberg, Zweite Auflage (Hannover: Hahnschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1824). I have also used the modern English translation; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

<sup>213</sup> Scharnhorst [1801-2?], 'Ueber die Operationen in Italien in May u. Junie 1800', Scharnhorst, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 676-9 cf. 677-8. 'Die Erfahrung[en] aller Zeiten haben beweisen, daß bei allen Entwürfen, wo nicht die politischen Aussichten und militärischen Möglichkeiten, wo nicht die Berechnung der Hülfsmittel zum Kriege und die Beurteilu[n]g des richtigstes Gebrauchs derselben, mit einem Wort, wo nicht Politik u. Kriegskunst mit einander innigste vereinigt war, auch selten große Dinge geschahen. Ich erinnere hier an diese Harmonie bei Noaille u. den Graf von Sachsen 1746, 47 u. 48, bei den Herzog Ferdinand, bei Friedrich den 2ten und in Gegensatze, an die neuern Vorfälle, an Choiseul u. Broglie 1761. Wo das Geheime Cabinet bloß nach rein militärischem Grundsetzen verfährt, wird es eben so fehlerhaft zu Werke gehen, als wenn es bei seinen politischen Entwürfen nicht durch eine gründliche Kentniße der militärischen Verhältnisse, nicht durch militärische Rücksichten geleitet wird. Hier müssen sich immer beide vereinigen. Dies war die Stärke der Franzosen während des Wohlfahrtausschußes und so lange Carnot einer der 5 Directoren war. Dieser Gegenstand ist sehr wichtig für das Wohl u. die Erhaltung eines Staats.'

Machiavelli presumed constant instability in political relationships, an analysis of politics largely based on his military outlook. Power fluctuated, consequently a political ruler needed to foresee challenges and handle these regardless of ideals and preferences. Virtue (*Virtù*) was explicated in the sense of powerful action, to seize an opportunity and use situations profitably for the state. Political power was consequently closely linked to military capability.<sup>214</sup> Machiavelli's views of military institutions and the art of war were outlined in *Arte della guerra* (1520).<sup>215</sup>

It is obvious that this view of the intimacy of *Kriegskunst* and *Politik*, in the style of Scharnhorst and Machiavelli, was inherited by the young Clausewitz. At a glance his suggestions of 1827 at the end of *Vom Kriege* followed this view quite clearly. Consequently, he did not invent or discover these ideas late in life as many interpretations suggest. The understanding of *Kriegskunst* and *Regierungskunst* during the Enlightenment makes this perfectly clear. Colonel Nicolai's treatment of the matter in 1781 claimed for example that *Staatskunst*, i.e. statecraft, transmigrated into the *Kriegskunst* in the event of war, since one could not separate peace from war.<sup>216</sup>

Captain Georg Venturini (1772-1802) portrayed strategy in 1800 as *Krieges-Dialektik*, i.e. the dialectics of war, which was a science for commanders, a *Feldherrnwissenschaft*, planning operations. The highest form of strategy was political judgement employed to estimate the political situation, a part Venturini labelled *die Kriegspolitik*, the politics of war.<sup>217</sup> This was also the term Jomini employed frequently somewhat later. Basically, Clausewitz's coining of war as continuation of *Politik* 1827 was thus nothing novel.<sup>218</sup> However, his broader and deeper meaning of *Politik* was more sophisticated than his contemporaries', which most interpretations fail to recognise.

The second interpretation of *Politik* as right in a moral sense was developed during the Enlightenment and epitomized by Kant during Clausewitz's youth. Hugo Grotius had suggested in *De jure belli ac pacis* (1625) some absolute and secularized regulations of the conditions of war and peace as a reaction to the initial horrors of the Thirty Years' War. His intention was to clarify the right in war and to distinguish war from peace.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> See Herfried Münkler, 'Kriegsführungsfähigkeit als politischer Imperativ – Niccoló Machiavelli über das Verhältnis zwischen den Staaten' in Ibid., *Über den Krieg – Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegel ihrer theoretischen Reflexion*, 5. Auflage (Birkach: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2008), 34-52; Felix Gilbert, 'Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War', *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 11-31

<sup>215</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, 'Die Kriegskunst in Sieben Büchern nebst den Kleinen militärischen Schriften', *Sämtliche Werke*, Dritter Band, Hg. Joh. Ziegler (Karlsruhe: Theodor Groos, 1833)

<sup>216</sup> Nicolai, *Die Anordnung einer gemeinsamen Kriegsschule für alle Waffen*, 5-7

<sup>217</sup> Georg Venturini, *Lehrbuch der Strategie oder eigentlichen Feldherrnwissenschaft*, Vol2/2 (Schleswig: Röhß, 1800), xi-xii

<sup>218</sup> Clausewitz, Nachricht Berlin, 10. Juli 1827, *Vom Kriege*, 179. 'daß der Krieg nichts ist als die fortgesetzte Staatspolitik mit anderen Mitteln.'

<sup>219</sup> Hugo Grotius, *Vom Kriegs- und Friedens-Recht*, Hg. Johann Heinrich Schweitzer (Zürich: 1718)

This conception of war and peace induced two distinct conditions of social order, which Clausewitz later contested.

The abstraction of war as '*der Krieg*' in singular form (*bellum in abstracto*) was a major feature of Clausewitz's ideas when he theorized strategy. He spoke of war as 'him', which was not unusual at the time. War was consequently thought of as a thing, which induced a belief in some sort of inner truth. The discourse on *Naturrecht*, i.e. Natural Right, was important to political thought after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648; exemplified by the works of, for example, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Hobbes experimented in *Leviathan* (1651) with a hypothetical society without the construction of the state. In *Leviathan* life was envisioned as ego-oriented, 'nasty, brutish and short', since the natural condition of mankind was '*warre* among all against all' (*bellum omnium contra omnes*).

The German translation of *Leviathan* in 1794 is interesting because it reflected important aspects of Clausewitz's ideas. Hobbes indicated that all people had the will to use brute force in natural conditions to promote themselves. The natural condition of mankind was a condition of war, above which people had to rise morally. By implication war seemed to have discernible military logic. War was to Clausewitz clearly a means for political power in the style of Machiavelli but also a distinct condition (*Zustand*), and this view dominated his thoughts for a long time. The adjustment in 1827 included a new view of this matter, which will be elaborated in chapter 13.

Clausewitz made *Gefecht*, fighting/combat his theoretical focal point, but he also observed the importance of the duration, elapsed time, (*Dauer*) as well as the disposition to use force à la Hobbes. It is not known whether Clausewitz read Hobbes, but these ideas reflected basic important tenets, seemingly common in military and political thought at the time. I cite Hobbes in English along with the German translation of 1794 to indicate these basic aspects later employed by Clausewitz.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell onely, or as the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foul weather, lyeth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.<sup>220</sup>

Hieraus ergibt sich, daß ohne eine einschränken *der Macht der Zustand* der Menschen ein solcher sey wie er zuvor beschrieben wurde nemlich ein Krieg aller gegen alle. Denn *der Krieg* dauert ja nicht etwann nur so lange als thätige Feindseligkeiten geübt werden, sondern so lange der

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<sup>220</sup> Tomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, first 1651), 88-89

Vorsatz herrscht, Gewalt mit *Gewalt* zu vertreiben. Beym Kriege kommt es, wie bey der Witterung, allein auf die *Dauer* desselben an. So wenig ein heftiger Regen schon eine nasse Witterung ist, eben so wenig wird irgend ein *einzelnes Gefecht ein Krieg* genannt werden können. Die Zeit aber, in der kein Krieg herrscht heißt Friede.<sup>221</sup>

When Kant revolutionized intellectual life in the late eighteenth century he also in due course addressed the development of civilized politics.<sup>222</sup> He refuted Machiavelli's concept of politics and argued for the necessity to include morality in political thought and action. Kant's political philosophy was integrated in his practical philosophy, in the parts on right and history, under the authority of pure practical reason.<sup>223</sup>

Previous practical philosophers had found justification for their ideas in normative constitutions, such as the will of God, the nature of man or the benefit of self-interest. Kant found this insufficient for developing unconditional practical laws for human behaviour. His ethical point of departure was: 'The categorical imperative is thus only a single one, namely: act only according to the maxim that you at the same time can wish as a general law of thought....act as if the maxim of your action should through your will become a general natural law.'<sup>224</sup>

Kant's political philosophy outlined the highest political good from the concept of right. He envisioned a political order based on parliamentary democracy, popular representation and division of power under a republican constitution.<sup>225</sup> Kant argued that peaceful political relations should be reached by implanting the idea of the republic as an international framework; to overcome the natural condition between states and create civilized international political order. This idea was most clearly articulated in his philosophical draft *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), which followed closely on Prussia's declaration of neutrality after the Peace of Basel. Kant stated a set of propositions for perpetual peace and envisioned the development of international right to be constructed as a federation of sovereign states.<sup>226</sup>

Peace was in that sense not the natural condition of mankind, but it was a political duty to maintain it in a civilized society. Kant's influence on Prussian political thought

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<sup>221</sup> Tomas Hobbes, *Leviathan oder der kirchliche und bürgerliche Staat*, Bd. 1. (Halle: Hendels Verlag, 1794), 123-24 (my emphasize)

<sup>222</sup> See Wolfgang Kersting, 'Politics, freedom, and order: Kant's political philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 342-66

<sup>223</sup> Kant outlined his practical philosophy in - *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788) and *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797).

<sup>224</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 4.te Auflage (Riga, J.F. Hartnoch, 1797), 52 'Der kategorische Imperativ ist also nur ein einziger, und zwar dieser: handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die' du zugleich wollen kannst, daß sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde...handle so, als ob die Maxime deiner Handlung durch deinen Willen zum allgemeinen Naturgesetz werden sollte.' This work presented Kant's teachings of moral right (*Rechtslehre*) and his short notes on international law (*Völkerrecht*).

<sup>225</sup> Kersting, *Politics, freedom, and order: Kant's political philosophy*, 361

<sup>226</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Frankfurt & Leipzig: 1796, first 1795)



at the turn of the century was massive. The political climate of Prussia when Clausewitz attended his military education has been summarized by Habermas as: *'The critical process of the public reasoning citizen that took effort against the power of the absolute state, did understand themselves as apolitical: the public meaning was going to rationalize Politik in the name of morality.'*<sup>227</sup> The German literature on *Naturrecht* at the turn of the century was extensive and the moral questions of how to develop society had a key role in public debate.<sup>228</sup>

At a time when Napoleon levitated as the arbiter of Europe, Clausewitz found Prussia's doctrine and policy towards the mighty France deeply inappropriate. Bonaparte had been recognized as a first-rate commander in the Campaign of 1796 in Italy. Towards the end of the 1790s the revolutionary party lost military and political momentum, which created a vacuum where Napoleon managed to usurp political power in the *coup d'état de Brumaire* 9-10 November 1799. He understood how to use his rising popularity; arranged a timely public referendum and was through clever propaganda 'democratically' appointed First Consul in the last days of 1799.

Napoleon's next aim was to end the war with the Second Coalition. To accomplish this he crossed the Alps with the French Army in mid-May 1800. The performance turned out to be a perfect strategic surprise finalized by the Battle of Marengo on 14 June, which was a victory with decisive impact on the entire Italian theatre. As mentioned earlier Scharnhorst's analysis of these spectacular events pointed to Napoleon's ability to unite war and politics, as well as his boldness to set large far-reaching purposes.<sup>229</sup> The same result was achieved on the German front by the victory of Hohenlindern in December 1800. The Treaty of Lunéville on 8 February 1801 ruined the Second Coalition, but peace in Europe was not established until the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802. The peace would last only fourteen months.

The French Army entered Scharnhorst's native Hanover in May 1803, disbanded the small army and took complete control at the beginning of July. Clausewitz started from this time to write frequently about his concern for the political future of Prussia and Europe, since he mistrusted the ambitious Bonaparte. A note from 1803, one of the first preserved, made a salient comparison to the power and ambitions of the Roman Empire: 'Rome wanted to conquer the world or at least govern it, France goes

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<sup>227</sup> Jürgen Habermas cited in Niemeyer's preface to *Denkwürdigkeiten der Militärischen gesellschaft zu Berlin*, III (my transl.)

<sup>228</sup> See for example: Christian Gottlieb Schaumann, *Wissenschaftliches Naturrecht* (Halle: Gerauer, 1792); Johann Heinrich Abicht, *Kurze Darstellung des Natur- und Völkerrecht zum Gebrauch der Vorlesungen* (Bayreuth: Johann Erben, 1795); Gottlieb Hufeland, *Lehrsätze des Naturrechts und der damit verbundenen Wissenschaften zu Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt: und Leipzig, 1795); Jacob, *Auszug aus dem Naturrecht*, (Halle: Rengerschen Buchhandlung, 1796); Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrecht nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (Jena & Leipzig, Gabler, 1796-97)

<sup>229</sup> Scharnhorst [1801/02], 'Ueber die Operationen in Italien in May u. Junie 1800', *Private und Diestliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 676-79. Cf his critical text 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Marengo. Auf Veranlassung der in dem Werke des Herrn v. Bülow: über den den Feldzug von 1800, enthaltenen Relation.', *Militärische Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, 1.Bd.1.St (Berlin: Wegener, September 1802), 52-59

powerfully for the same purpose; it will oppress the other states by its sheer dimensions and make everyone else closely dependent. That is the horrible result of a comparison.'<sup>230</sup> At the same time Scharnhorst sent a fellow Hanoverian officer a history of the attack on Menin in 1794 that showed 'what one can do, if one only wants', clearly indicating his objection to the prevailing political weakness.<sup>231</sup>

*Politik* in the sense of statecraft and governance was at the time defined as *Staatsklughet*, the leading political wisdom of the state, as in Adelung's dictionary of 1801: '*Staatsklugheit* is the proficiency to realize the coherence of state matters and direct these profitably for the welfare of the state; to use a word of art coined from the Greek, *die Politik*.'<sup>232</sup> Clausewitz clearly questioned the current ruling wisdom of foreign policy in his notes. Even so, the underpinning critical philosophy elaborated a terminology reflected in his texts. Clausewitz asked in the same critical tone as Scharnhorst about the causes of the current *Kleinmut*, timidity, since 'great power impressed only cowards'.<sup>233</sup> He pondered a different answer in a note on coalitions and pointed to the negative impact of the philosophy of right in the present situation.

In the *Politik* there are two kinds of coalition: one seeks honestly the destruction or defeat of the enemy, the other intends to weaken, keep disturbed, etc. [cf. limited aim], the State against which one has formed a coalition and the State with which one has formed the coalition. Politicians who view this purpose of the coalition as impermissible sacrifice the State at whose head they stand to their rightfulness [*Rechtlichkeit*]. They are actually egotists since they are acting at the head of a State in the same way as they should in private life. They thus consider themselves as the purpose and the State as made over to them.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Clausewitz, note 1803, *Schriften* (1922), 1. 'Rome wollte die Welt erobern oder wollte sie wenigstens regieren, Frankreich geht mit starken Schritten auf einen gleichen Zweck los; es will die übrigen Staaten mit Seiner Größe erdrücken und in tiefer Abhängigkeit von sich erhalten. Dies ist das furchtbare Resultat der Vergleichung.'

<sup>231</sup> Scharnhorst to Ludwig Freiherr v. Ompteda, Berlin June 1803?, *Private und Diestliche Schriften* Vol3/6, 138

<sup>232</sup> 'Staatsklugheit' in Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 4 (Leipzig: 1801), 260. [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000446572> accessed 24 May 2012. 'Die Staatsklugheit, plur. car. die Fertigkeit, den Zusammenhang der Staatssachen einzusehen, und selbige zur Wohlfahrt des Staates vortheilhaft zu leiten; mit einem Griechischen Kunstworte die Politik.'

<sup>233</sup> Clausewitz, note 1803, *Schriften* (1922), 2

<sup>234</sup> Clausewitz [1803], 'note - Über Koalitionen', *Schriften* (1922), 3. 'Es gibt in der Politik zwei Arten von Koalitionen, die einen zwecken redlich auf den Untergang oder die Bezwungung des Feindes ab, die anderen haben die Absicht, den Staat, gegen welchen man sich koalisiert und den Staat, mit welchem man sich koalisiert, zu *schwächen*, zu *beschäftigen* usw. Politiker, die diesen Zweck der Koalition für unerlaubt halten, machen den Staat, an dessen Spitze sie stehen, zum Opfer ihrer Rechtlichkeit. Sie sind eigentliche Egoisten, denn sie handeln an der Spitze eines Staates, wie sie im Privatleben handeln sollten. Sie betrachten sich also als den Zweck, und den Staat als ihnen beigegeben.'

critical philosophy in the sense of *Naturrecht* regarded power and force (*Gewalt*) as the conceptual opposite of right. Theoretically, the condition of war (*Kriegszustand*) was referred to as a condition of no rights (*Zustand der Rechtlosigkeit*), due to the lack of a competent arbiter (*Richter*). Clausewitz later labelled, literally and figuratively, the decision by arms as the highest arbiter of foreign-political relations. The concept of hostility also contributed to the condition of no-rights in war.<sup>235</sup> The concept of hostility was at the core of Clausewitz's theorizing of strategy after Waterloo. In the same manner war was explained as coercion (*Zwang*). In a philosophical sense war was elaborated as *Zwangsrecht*, a means to coerce and as a right to coerce. Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) analysis of the theory of social contract argued that war was the natural condition and peace just an armistice. Fichte's 1797 analysis was seemingly the root of the later widely used concept of *Vernichtung*, which induced the logic of political overthrow by military annihilation.<sup>236</sup>

The right of war is like all *Zwangsrecht* [right of coercion], unlimited. The attacked party has no right since he will not recognise the right of the belligerent state. Somewhat later he sues for peace and offers to acquiesce henceforward. But how should the belligerent be convinced that the attacked is in earnest and that he is not merely awaiting a better opportunity to oppress him? What guarantees can he [the attacked party] give him for this? Now, the natural purpose of war is always the *Vernichtung* [annihilation] of the attacked state, the subjugation of its citizens. It may be that sometimes a peace (really only an armistice) is concluded because either one State, or both, is exhausted; but the mutual mistrust remains and the purpose of the subjugation remains the same in both.<sup>237</sup>

War was clarified as the right of coercion in a style that resembled Clausewitz's early view of the political purpose of war. Fichte's discussion indicated that the concepts of annihilation (*Vernichtung*) and overthrow (*Unterwerfung* in Fichte's account and mostly *Niederwerfung* in Clausewitz's texts) had their origins in political and moral thought. Clausewitz wrote in his notes about strategy 1804:

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<sup>235</sup> 'Zustand' in Mellin, *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der kritischen Philosophie*, Vol 6, 320-28

<sup>236</sup> This has been pointed out by Hagemann, *Die Deutsche Lehre vom Kriege*, 103; Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 26

<sup>237</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrecht nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*, Zweiter Theil oder Angewandtes Naturrecht (Jena & Leipzig: Gabler, 1797), 258. 'Das Recht des Krieges, ist, wie nach obigem alles Zwangsrecht, unendlich. Der bekriegte hat keine Rechte, weil er die Rechte des Kriegführenden Staats nicht anerkennen will. – Er bittet etwa späterhin um Friede, und erbietet sich von nun an gerecht zu seyn. Wie soll aber der kriegführende überzeugt werden, daß es ihm Ernst sey, und daß er sich nicht bloß eine bessere Gelegenheit ersehen wolle um ihn zu unterdrücken? Welche Garantie kann er ihm dagegen geben? – Also der natürliche Zweck des Kriegs ist immer die *Vernichtung des bekriegten Staats*, d.i. die Unterwerfung seiner Bürger. Es kann wohl seyn, daß zuweilen ein Friede, (eigentlich nur ein Waffenstillstand) geschlossen wird, weil entweder ein Staat, oder weil beide gegenwärtig entkräftet sind; aber das gegenseitige Mißtrauen bleibt und der Zweck der Unterjochung bleibt gleichfalls bei beiden.'

The purpose of war [*Zweck des Krieges*]: here the purposes in war link up, and from this [political purpose] must start the reasoning about operational plans. The political purpose of war can be of two kinds. Either to totally annihilate [*vernichten*] the enemy, [i.e.] abolish his existence as a state, or to lay down conditions for peace. In both cases it must be the intention to lame the hostile power to such an extent that he cannot at all, or not without danger to his whole existence, continue the war. Destruction of fighting powers is thus the more immediate purpose of war and the closest way to do this always constitutes the law of thought for the art [of war].<sup>238</sup>

Clausewitz described the annihilation of enemy fighting power as the highest aim (*das höchste*). He adopted annihilation and overthrow deep into his way of thinking strategy, which followed the logic of war explicated in the discourse of natural right. His early texts treated enforced and dictated peace rather than negotiated and bargained. The latter had dominated the transmigration of war to peace during the Enlightenment. Scharnhorst argued however in his lecture notes that the purpose of an attack was not always battle, thus not always annihilation.<sup>239</sup> This means the political moderation of combat was clear and present in military thought in spite of the hardcore logic elucidated in philosophy. However, it is also evident that military accounts frequently tended to circumvent the political aspects of the conduct of war in the quest for military laws of thought.

Clausewitz's later distinction conceptualized as the 'double kinds of war' took up the difference to the modus of peace more clearly. But negotiation was always part of Clausewitz's thinking and experience of strategy; for example in the use of *Wechselhandel*, barter, to depict what the result of combat in war can do for the bargaining position in the transition to peace. The rising Bonaparte challenged the balance of power in Europe by his sheer performance backed by the grand dimensions of a politically coherent warring France. Clausewitz was afraid this increasing preponderance would destroy the traditional moral respect in European politics. He was worried this would call forth the '*Gesetzen der Natur*', laws of nature, a view resembling the Hobbesian.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie - 13. Operationsplan', *Schriften* (1979), 1-61, cf.20. 'Zweck des Krieges: an diesen knüpfen sich die zwecke im Kriege an, und von ihn also muß das Raisonement über Operationspläne beginnen...Der politisches Zweck des Krieges kann doppelter Art sein. Entweder den Gegner ganz zu vernichten, seine Staatenexistenz aufzuheben, oder ihm beim Frieden Bedingungen vorzuschreiben. In beiden Fällen muß es die Absicht sein, die feindlichen Kräfte so zu lähmen, dass er entweder gar nicht ohne Gefahr seiner ganzen Existenz den Krieg fortsetzen kann. Die Zerstörung der Streitkräfte ist also der nähere Zweck des Krieges, und der Nächste Weg dazu macht allemal das Gesetz der Kunst aus.'

<sup>239</sup> Lehmann, Scharnhorst, Vol1/2, 314; Mette, *Vom Geist deutscher Feldherrn*, 52

<sup>240</sup> Clausewitz, note 1803, *Schriften* (1922), 1-2

The concept of *Gleichgewicht*, i.e. political equilibrium, was intimate to military power and frequently used to understand the politics of Europe after the Thirty Years' War.<sup>241</sup> Clausewitz adopted and expanded this concept as fundament for strategic thought to understand the dynamics of war. His early understanding of the concept was as an informal construction as a self-regulating system in which the major powers of Europe joined forces interchangeably. This understanding was derived, at least partly, from Johannes von Müller's (1752-1809) patriotic history of the Swiss confederation. Clausewitz also read, probably somewhat later, Friedrich von Gentz's (1764-1832) history of European political equilibrium, which severely criticized French hegemony after Austerlitz in 1805.<sup>242</sup>

Clausewitz was personally acquainted with both these scholars in Berlin.<sup>243</sup> Gentz later settled in Austria and worked as advisor to Clemens von Metternich (1773-1859). Metternich was the person most intimately associated with the concept during the campaigns of 1813-1814. After Waterloo he used it as a tool to secure peace in Europe in combination with securing a strong political position for Austria in Central Europe. The notion of equilibrium was in *Vom Kriege* developed considerably in a strategic sense as we will see later. In 1803 however equilibrium was outlined as an ordering principle of European state politics, as a thing that appeared independently when stability of equilibrium *per se* was under threat.

The *System* of political equilibrium never appears until the actual equilibrium is in danger of being lost. For as long as the natural weight of the state, with no visible tendency, with no moral effort, suffices to maintain the whole machine at rest, i.e. without violent oscillation, in its place, so far we may speak of the system's equilibrium; it is maintained of its own accord. Thus we can observe this in the North of Europe, Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Russia from Gustav Wasa down to the Thirty Years' War, without the preponderance of any state and without endeavours to suppress such preponderance.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 56-77; Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations – Metaphors, Myths and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

<sup>242</sup> Johannes von Müller, *Der Geschichten Schweizerischer Eidgenossenschaft*, 5 Vols (Leipzig: Weidmannischen Buchhandlung, 1786-1808); Friedrich von Gentz, *Fragmente aus der neusten Geschichte des Gleichgewichts in Europa*, Zweite Auflage (St. Petersburg: Hartsnoch, 1806)

<sup>243</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 107

<sup>244</sup> Clausewitz, note 1803, *Schriften* (1922), 3-4. 'Das politische Gleichgewichts System zeigt sich immer erst, wenn das Gleichgewicht selbst in Gefahr ist, verloren zu gehen. Denn solange die natürliche Schwere der Staaten ohne irgend eine sichtbare Tendenz ohne eine moralische Anstrengung hinreichend ist, die ganze Maschine in Ruhe, d.h. ohne gewaltige Oszillation, also alles auf Seinem Flecke zu erhalten, solange ist von Seinem Gleichgewichts Systems die Rede; es besteht das Gleichgewicht von Selbst. So sehen wir den Norden von Europa, Schweden, Dänemark, Polen und Russland von Gustav Wasa bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg ohne präponderanz irgend eines Staates und ohne Bestreben eine solche präponderanz zu unterdrücken.'

Finally, the last example of ideas adopted from moral discourse is the distinction of *Angriffskrieg* – *Defensivkrieg*, i.e. aggressive and defensive war (*bellum offensivum et defensivum*). Jena Professor Gottlieb Hufeland (1760-1817), seemingly thinking from Kant's schemata, observed in 1795 that the first moment of hostilities could no longer be the guiding principle to classify war. He argued instead that the intention and purpose of a war had to be adopted as the principle for classification.<sup>245</sup> The emphasis on intention and not on the actual moment of open hostilities intermingled war, morals and politics. Clausewitz followed this typology and differentiated war into *Erhaltung* – *status quo*, i.e. preservation in defence, and *Eroberung* – conquest in attack.<sup>246</sup>

Clausewitz identified himself to a great extent with Prussia, which was reflected in growing passionate patriotism for Prussia and things German. His notes from 1805 after Bonaparte had been appointed Emperor revealed contempt for the weakness and the political game that took place in Prussia. The discrepancy between the political ideals of the time and reality was pinpointed as: 'The most important political maxims are for me: never expect generosity from others; never give up a purpose before it is impossible to achieve; consider the honour of the state as holy.'<sup>247</sup>

I have in this part pointed to the basic, close relation of political, moral and military thought. Ideas of war, power and right intermingle. Clausewitz employed here a set of concepts to conceptualize strategy. Consequently, many of his military ideas also had political and moral roots. The basic understanding of the intimate relation of *Politik* and war was indeed not new to Clausewitz in 1827; on the contrary this was tradition. The multiple roots did not exclude the notion that the conduct of war was conceptualized according to military principles and ideals, however, for as we will see in the next part, war was anyway thought of as a distinct condition – a *Kriegszustand*.

## DISCONNECTED MILITARY VISIONS AND REALITIES

German-language military literature and journals flourished in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>248</sup> French military thinkers had pursued the ambition to establish military practice as a respected science during the Enlightenment and this was continued in German military thought as well. Lieutenant-colonel Joly de Maizeroy (1719-80) and Jacques Comte de Guibert (1743-90) outlined different systems of tactics. The former reintroduced the term strategy by translating Emperor Leo's work on military institutions into French in 1771. This appeared in German in 1777-1781.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Gottlieb Hufeland, *Lehrsätze des Naturrechts und der damit verbundenen Wissenschaften zu Vorlesungen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised and expanded Ed. (Frankfurt und Leipzig: 1795), 343

<sup>246</sup> See for example Clausewitz [February 1812], *Bekanntnisdenschrift, Schriften* (1966), 742

<sup>247</sup> Clausewitz, notes 1805, *Schriften* (1922), 4-5, cf. 4. 'Die wichtigsten politischen Regeln sind mir: nie sorglos zu sein; nicht von der Großmut anderer zu erwarten; eine Zweck nicht eher aufgeben, bis es unmöglich ist, ihn zu erreichen; die Ehre des Staates als heilig zu betrachten.'

<sup>248</sup> See overviews in Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften*, Book 8; Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 27-96

<sup>249</sup> Joly de Maizeroy, *Institutions Militaires De L'Empereur Leon Le Philosophie*, 2 Vols (Paris: Dauphine, 1771); *Kaiser Leo des Philosophen Strategie und Taktik*, Hg. Johann W Bourscheid, 5 Vols. (Trattem: 1777-81)

The term strategy has Greek origins, derived from *strategos* (pl. *strategoi*), which had the meaning of general and military governor with a joint political and military scope.<sup>250</sup> In that sense Pericles for example (495-429 BC) was *strategos* several times. The Greek word for strategy in the meaning of the 'art or the practice of the general' was either *strategía* or *strategiké*.<sup>251</sup> *Strategíke epistémē* reflected the general's knowledge and *strategos sophia* the general's wisdom. *Strategemata* was the Greek title of Iulius Frontinus' Latin work on stratagem usually understood as tricks in war (Fr. *Ruses de Guerre*) and a clever scheme to gain an end.

A similar Greek term was *taktike technē*, which addressed the entire body of military knowledge. The term was used in the Byzantine Empire to describe the way to organize and manoeuvre a body of armed men in an orderly manner. *Strategiké* was understood as the means by which the general defends his land and defeats the enemy. The Byzantine Emperor Leo IV (866-912) wrote a comprehensive work on *strategía* and *taktiké*. Military knowledge and practice were thus differentiated into two categories; one, more technical, focused on the military force itself while the other focused more on utilization dependent on purpose, similar to later military thought. But the term strategy was apparently not used during the Middle Ages.

Most military writers between 1500 and 1770, such as Machiavelli, Montecuccoli and Puysegur addressed military matters more in the style of one coherent concept. The explicated difference reappeared with the translation of Emperor Leo's works, which seems to have been the moment when the term strategy was reintroduced into European military thought.<sup>252</sup> The conduct of war had of course not disappeared, but it had been addressed in other words such as in Machiavelli's *Art of War* (1520) and Puysegur's *Military Instructions* (1690).<sup>253</sup>

Maizeroy also published *Théorie de la guerre* (1777), a theory of war in the realm of higher tactics and strategy.<sup>254</sup> The belief in perennial principles of warfare was supported by studies of classical warfare. These works were part of the young Napoleon's military education. In the German-speaking world Henry Lloyd's (c.1729-1783) historical and didactic writings on the Seven Years' War probably gained even more attention. He was Welsh by birth, a mercenary officer and educated at Oxford.<sup>255</sup> He attained the rank of major-general despite serving in several different armies. Lloyd's first account in 1766 was deepened 1781 into a '*Reflection on the General Principles of War*'.

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<sup>250</sup> On the classic origins of strategy see for example Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 239-41; Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, 3-9

<sup>251</sup> Most western languages adopted the Greek term for strategy; for example *Strategie* in German, *stratégie* in French and *strategia* in Italian.

<sup>252</sup> Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 43-44; Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, 3

<sup>253</sup> *Les Memoire de Messire Jaques de Chastenet Chevalier, Seigneur De Puysegur* (Amsterdam: Wolfgang, 1690)

<sup>254</sup> Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften*, 2083-84

<sup>255</sup> A synpathic account of Lloyd has been made in Patrick J. Speelman, *Henry Lloyd and the Military Enlighthenment of Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002)

Lloyd separated the art of war into two parts. The mechanical part could be investigated and developed by mathematics. The second more sublime part was only accessible to genius. Only genius could master the infinite range of situational combinations that the fixed perennial principles of war made possible. Lloyd's work was translated into German and expanded by the artilleryman Georg Friedrich von Tempelhoff (1737-1807), a well-known military intellectual and educator, promoted to lieutenant-general in 1802 and a respected member of the *Militärische Gesellschaft*.<sup>256</sup> Lloyd outlined a terminology to structure operations that still surfaces in military language. Lloyd wrote in 1781:

It is universally agreed upon, that no art or science is more difficult than that of war; yet, by an unaccountable contradiction of the human kind, those who embrace this profession take little or no pains to study it. They seem to think, that knowledge of a few insignificant and useless trifles constitutes a great officer...This art, like all others, is founded on certain and fixed principles, which are by their nature invariable, the application of them only can be varied: but they are in themselves constant. This most difficult science may, I think, be divided into two; one mechanical [tactics], and may be taught by precepts; the other has no name [Lloyd had obviously not adopted the term strategy yet], nor can it be defined or taught. It consist in a just application of the principles and precepts of war, in all the numberless circumstances and situations which occur; no rule, no study, or application, however assiduous, no experience, however long, can teach this part; it is the effect of genius alone.<sup>257</sup>

The Prussian officer Carl von Seidl's history of the then recent Bavarian War of Succession (1781) employed the term *Strategie* frequently, which indicated the adoption of the term in German military language. Seidl's theoretical clarification resembled more or less Clausewitz's basic understanding of strategy. Statecraft decided about war and provided purpose. The commander made strategy, which followed military rules of thought to conceptualize the plan and conduct of the war. This view is important to observe to understand military thought of this time. However, in practice continual political direction of the conduct of war was self-evident. I will now cite two accounts about the basic understanding of strategy present before Clausewitz: First, Seidl's view on the roots of strategy, observe his view of statecraft as well as a distinct military sphere.

Strategy is directly derived from a Greek word: (Army Commander - *Heerführer*) – immediately however from the conduct of war – [*Kriegführen*], it thus means the art of commanding an army [*Heerführerkunst*]; and the duty is – initially to make a plan of the whole

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<sup>256</sup> G.F. v. Tempelhoff, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges in Deutschland zwischen dem Könige von Preußen und der Kaiserin Königen mit ihren Alliierten als eine Fortsetzung der Geschichte des General Lloyd*, 6 Vols. (Berlin: Unger, 1783-1801)

<sup>257</sup> Major-General Lloyd, *Continuation of the History of the late war in Germany between the King of Prussia and the Empress of Germany and Her Allies*, Part II (London: Hooper, 1781), vi-vii



war: (here the relation to statecraft emerges:) to decide the plan of every campaign according the composition of defensive or offensive operations; and *here it shows itself in its own complete sphere, following rules of its own*, according to which it decides...<sup>258</sup>

Secondly, Friedrich von Nicolai's account, cited below, from the same year as Seidl's, 1881, described the logical chain of different command activities that later characterised Clausewitz's writings about strategy and tactics. Nicolai discussed the distinction of higher tactics and elementary tactics, a terminology that on a few occasions also surfaced in Clausewitz's earlier texts. He also most clearly explained strategy as a user of tactics and tactical result so intimate to Clausewitz, which clearly proves that the latter did not invent this military perspective as some scholars have suggested. Nicolai's outline was thus close to Clausewitz's understanding and indeed not so far from today's structure.

The first link in this chain connects the elementary tactics; the higher tactics learn to connect coherently in different ways, i.e. to manoeuvre [cf. operational art]. Strategy seeks to use this purposefully, that is to operate, to tie operation to operation and through regular arrangement of the same direct the unfolding of the war to the desired results. This is the main outline of the entire construction of war, when one observes it from the perspective of a scientific system that should have compactness, [and] not as an indeterminate mechanism that consist of a pure consequence of coincidental *Thathandlungen* (cf. Kant, deed-acts action with energy).<sup>259</sup>

The scientific aspect of strategy was further clarified by Friedrich Nockhern von Schorn. He was a colonel from the Netherlands and sought to systematize military knowledge with the help of philosophy and then logic. His work was published in French in 1783 and two years later in German. Schorn argued for the importance of method and a

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<sup>258</sup> Carl v. Seidl, *Versuch einer militärischen Geschichte des Bayerischen Erbfolgekriegs, im Jahre 1778. Im Gesichtspunkte der Wahrheit*, Vol 1/3 (Königsberg: 1781), 54. 'Strategie kommt unmittelbar von einem griechischen Worte: (Heerführer) – mittelbar aber von (Kriegführen) der; - heißt also die Heerführerkunst; und ihre Pflicht ist – den Entwurf eines ganzen Krieges zuerst machen: (hier zeigt sich ihre Verwandtschaft mit der Staatskunde:) den Entwurf eines jedes jeden Feldzugs nach der Beschaffenheit der Defensiv oder Offensiv Operation zu bestimmen; und hier zeigt sie sich ganz in ihrer eigenen Sphäre, folget selbst eigenen Regeln, nach welchen sie bestimmt...'

<sup>259</sup> Ferdinand Friedrich von Nicolai, *Die Anordnung einer gemeinsamen Kriegsschule für alle Waffen, ein Entwurf* (Stuttgart: Realer, 1781), 2-3. 'Die ersten Gelenke zu dieser Kette bindet die Elementar-Taktik; die höhere Taktik lehret sie auf verschiedene Weise zusammen zu hängen, das ist, zu manövrieren. Die Strategie sucht, sie zweckmäßig anzuwenden, das ist zu operieren, Operationen an Operationen zu binden und durch regelmäßige Anordnung derselben den Lauf des Kriegs zu verlangten Resultaten zu leiten. Dieß ist der haupt-umriß von dem ganzen Gebäude des Kriegs, wenn man denselben aus dem Gesichtspunkte eines wissenschaftliches Systems, das Bündigkeit haben soll, nicht eines unbestimmten Mechanismus, der in einer bloßen Folge zufälliger Thathandlungen besteht, betrachten will.'

general system to bring order to military thought. He conceptualized war in four interrelated perspectives: nature, form, relation to politics and finally the operation. Strategy was defined as '*die Kunst Kriegsoperationen zu führen*', i.e. the art of conducting operations of war.<sup>260</sup> Schorn distinguished clearly between the science of war and the art of war, which indicates an understanding of military theory and practice just prior to the French Revolution:

I make a great distinction between the science and the art of war. The first consists of complete knowledge of the nature of the object, its *Grundsätzen* and *Regeln* and is to be learnt only by study and reflection. The art on the contrary is the proficiency to act according to these *Grundsätzen* and *Regeln* and will only be acquired through practice. For even if the art presupposes science, and is subordinated, one should not imagine one can do precisely everything theory teaches, if one is not – a genius... Military genius is a natural and decisive virtue, to perceive in art, to judge, to invent and to act. One does not acquire genius, one is born with it.<sup>261</sup>

Schorn pointed out two frequent concepts in Clausewitz's thought that require further explanation as part of similar terms. The German distinction between objective and subjective recognitions and propositions often disappears in English translations. Earlier I noted *Vorstellung* as a subjective pictorial idea with no real English equivalent. In a similar way, *Grundsatz* (pl. *Grundsätze*) is a subjective proposition, which however is often translated as 'principle' with a more objective and immutable connotation. For example, Clausewitz's 1812 account for the crown prince entitled *Die Wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens* has been translated as *The Principles of War* (1943), which projects onto his subjective propositions at the time a more objective status than intended.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Friedrich Nockhern v. Schorn, *Versuch über ein allgemeines System aller militärischen Kenntnisse. T. 1-3. Nebst einer einleuchtenden Methode die Kriegswissenschaft mit Ordnung und Erkenntniss zu studieren* (Nürnberg und Altdorf: Georg Peter Ronath, 1785). See also Max Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften vornehmlich in Deutschland*, Vol 3/3 (München: Oldenbourg, 1891), 1775-80.

<sup>261</sup> Cited in Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften*, 1779. 'Ich mache einen großen Unterschied zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst des Krieges. Die erst besteht in der vollkommenen Kenntnis der Natur des Gegenstandes, seinen Grundsätzen und Regeln und erlernt sich nur durch Studium und Nachdenken. Die Kunst hingegen ist die Geschicklichkeit, nach jenen Grundsätzen und Regeln zu handeln und wird nur durch Praxis erreicht. Denn obgleich die Kunst die Wissenschaft voraussetzt, und ihr untergeordnet ist, so darf man sich nicht einbilden, dasjenige, was uns die Theorie gelehrt, gleich ausüben zu können, wenn man nicht – ein Genie ist... Das militärische Genie ist ein natürlicher und entscheidender Vorzug, in der Art wahrzunehmen, zu urtheilen, zu erfinden und zu wirken. Man erwirbt sich nicht Genie, sondern wird damit geboren.'

<sup>262</sup> Clausewitz [Before 13 April 1812], 'Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichtes bei SR. königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen', *Vom Kriege*, 1047-86. The text was published 1834 as a complement to *Vom Kriege* part III. Cf. Gatzke's

Kant elaborated the basic German distinction in *Critique of Practical Reason*: 'Practical *Grundsätze* are propositions which contain a general determination of the will that subsumes several practical rules (*Regeln*). These are subjective or maxims, when the condition is regarded by the subject as only valid for his own will; but are objective or practical laws of thought (*Gesetze*) when they are recognized objectively, i.e. valid for the will of every sensible [*vernünftigen*] being.'<sup>263</sup> The practical use of the terms seemed to differ somewhat. I frequently use the German terms to indicate that they had mostly a more subjective meaning than many suggest. In 1827-1829 Clausewitz elaborated, in a final chapter for Book 2, his use of the basic terminology in three levels, indispensable if one is to understand the reach of his recognitions and ideas.

1. *Gesetz* had the meaning 'practical law of thought'. It was the most general term for recognition and action, according to Clausewitz: '[*Gesetz*] has obviously a somewhat subjective and conditional literal meaning but expresses that on which we and things apart from us are dependent. *Gesetz* as an object of recognition is the mutual relation of the thing and its effect; as a object of the will it is a condition of action and then tantamount to *Gebot* and *Verbot* [i.e. command and interdiction].'<sup>264</sup>

2. *Grundsatz* was a law for action, i.e. similar to *Gesetz*, but not in the formal definite sense, instead only in the spirit and sense of a law of thought where the manifold nature of the world could not be expressed in a definite form. This implied greater freedom for judgement in use. A case when judgement could use a *Grundsatz* had to justify itself and was in that sense only a clue or lodestar for action. The *Grundsatz* could be objective when the result was an objective truth valid for everyone, but was called 'maxim' in a subjective sense. Mainly, precept and axiom seem the most appropriate equivalent terms in English.

3. *Regel*, i.e. rule, was used in a similar sense to a law of thought (*Gesetz*). One did not say 'no law without exception', but 'no rule without exception', so the latter allowed freer use. Another meaning of rule was as a means to recognize a single close aspect as a profound truth and connect this to the whole truth as a law of action. This kind of rule was similar to every kind of game rule and shortened mathematical procedure. Regulations (*Vorschriften*) and instructions (*Anweisungen*) concerned more detailed procedures too numerous and unimportant to be general laws.

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translation of Clausewitz's essay for the crown prince 1812. Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, Trans. Hans W. Gatzke (Harrisburg PA: 1942); reprinted in *Roots of Strategy* Military Classics, Vol 2/3 (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1987)

<sup>263</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*, §1, 21. 'Praktische Grundsätze sind Sätze, welche eine allgemeine Bestimmung des Willens enthalten, die mehre praktische Regeln unter sich hat. Sie sind subjektiv oder Maximen, die Bedingung nur als für den Willen des Subjekts gültig von ihm angesehen wird; objektiv aber oder praktische Gesetze, wenn jene als objektiv, d.i. für den Willen jedes vernünftigen Wesens gültig erkannt wird.'

<sup>264</sup> Clausewitz [1827-28], 'Methodismus', *Vom Kriege* 2:4, 305-11, cf. 305. 'hat in seiner Wortbedeutung offenbar etwas Subjektives und Willkürliches und drückt doch gerade dasjenige aus, wovon wir und die Dinge außer uns abhängig sind. Gesetz als ein Gegenstand der Erkenntnis ist das Verhältnis der Dinge und ihrer Wirkungen zueinander; als Gegenstand des Willens ist es eine Bestimmung des Handelns und dann gleichbedeutend mit Gebot und Verbot.'

Clausewitz had a rather sceptical view of *Gesetz* in terms of the traditional recognition of regularities for a theory of war to think strategy properly. The shift from the Enlightenment to Romanticism has been characterized as a great discontinuity due to Kant's profound influence on intellectual life. There was prior to Kant a fundamental belief in rationalism: that the human mind had through reason the capacity to achieve complete access to the logical and regular structures of the world. Kant contested this belief in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1780). Man had only access to a world of phenomena, i.e. as mentioned above how the thing appeared to the mind and not the thing-in-itself.

Kant's definition of the Enlightenment was published in an essay in *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in December 1784. The text was a polemical to a suggestion in the same paper from J.F. Zöllner, a clergyman working for the Prussian government. Kant asked: 'What is enlightenment?' and answered: 'Enlightenment is man's egress from his self-inflicted immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use of one's own reason without paying attention to others' directions. This immaturity is self-inflicted, since the cause is not lack of reason, instead a lack of resolution and courage to use one's own [reason].... *Sapere aude!* Be brave, use your own reason! This is thus the motto of the Enlightenment.'<sup>265</sup> Kant was brave to challenge both the church and Friedrich the Great, and to contribute to a society built on the idea of freedom. As we saw in the previous part his moral tenets dominated thought German political thinking, which influenced military thought.

The concept of *Fortschritt*, general progress, and *Veränderung*, change, to conceptualize historical progress was established in the German language at this time, apparently by Kant. These concepts had the optimistic connotation of perfection - *Vervollkommnung*. General progress made man in theory able to reach higher cultural standards. According to Koselleck, progress was long understood as the conceptual opposite to *Niedergang*, i.e. decline. He depicted three historical stages of human thought about this matter.<sup>266</sup>

History was not understood as process in ancient history. The Greek historian Thucydides applied for example concepts of medicine to examine the Peloponnesian War and did not connect the past with the future to make Greek history a history of progress. Thucydides however did distinguish between the Greeks and the Barbarians from the perspective of law and military ability. The Greek states were able to live in times of peace but waged war internally. This was a first relative model of progress and civilisation, which depicted the rise and decline of military might and political power.

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<sup>265</sup> Immanuel Kant [December 1784], 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?', *Immanuel Kant's vermichte Schriften*, Vol 2 (Halle: Rengerschen, 1799), 689-700, cf. 689. 'Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Sapere aude!* Habe Muth, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.'

<sup>266</sup> I follow Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten*, 159-81

The medieval Christian understanding of progress was related to salvation, which took place between creation and the end of time. Thus the French abbot Gerhard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) depicted the Christian strife for perfection: 'Nobody is perfect, who strives not for even more perfection.'<sup>267</sup> 'Profectus' in the life world was the striving for 'perfectus' in the world of God. The religious notion of the future as the end of the world transmigrated into a more secularised idea of an open future during the Renaissance.

Better understanding of nature, technology, art and other aspects of life formed a new way of understanding the world, but the struggle for perfection remained. The Enlightenment recalled an interest in Classical time, comparable to the French quest for a military science already mentioned. Later in life Clausewitz regarded detailed military theoretical standpoints justified in classic warfare *per se* as nonsense; but he made overviews of classic history, probably in the first phase of writing *Vom Kriege*.<sup>268</sup> His 1804 notebook on strategy also contained a few references.

The contradiction of progress and decline was dissolved during the Enlightenment. Instead decline became understood as temporary and a stimulus for new progress. The strife for perfection, *Vollkommenheit*, influenced the thinking about science, art and society in general during the eighteenth century. The intellectual ambition was often to discover eternal laws in all forms of things and matters. In the search for the perfect order of society even moral laws were examined with mathematical methods. An optimistic view of progress was that the limit of progress was progress itself.

The Enlightenment desire to make war a science was reflected in the quest for great systems, perennial laws and progress towards military perfection. Koselleck argued that thinkers had started to understand history as a process in the later part of the eighteenth century: 'The experience of the past and the expectation of the future intermingled, and were analysed in the sense of development, and the difference was finally brought together in one concept of progress.'<sup>269</sup> This helped construct a horizon of the future. Kant clarified this sense of progress in the German language during the late eighteenth century.

Former Prussian officer and military writer Adam Dietrich Heinrich v. Bülow (1757-1808) decoded a new system of war, the *Geist des Neuern Kriegssystems* (1799), from the concept of operational base.<sup>270</sup> Bülow argued in the spirit of Kant: 'It is a mistake, that the science of war is not mandatory education, since its final purpose is the annihilation [*Vernichtung*] of the human race. Without it [science] would consist of a series of murdering actions, which would be as useless as purposeless.'<sup>271</sup> Bülow

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<sup>267</sup> 'Nobody is perfect, who not strive for perfection.' Cited in Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten*, 166

<sup>268</sup> Clausewitz [1816-1823?], 'Überblick über die römische Geschichte', never published but on the list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* 1889, *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74

<sup>269</sup> Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten*, 173

<sup>270</sup> On Bülow see Jähns, *Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften*, 2133-45; Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 81-96

<sup>271</sup> Adam Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, *Geist des Neuern Kriegssystems hergeleitet aus dem Grundsätze einer Basis der Operationen, auch für Laien in der Kriegskunst fasslich vorgetragen von*

followed and deepened the model of operations outlined by Lloyd and Tempelhoff. With geometrical precision the attack on an army was clarified as a triangle between the operational base, the army and the object of operations. Bülow argued that the success of an attacking army depended on the angle of operations. He pinpointed the prosperous span, somewhat simplified, as between about 60 degrees and around 90 degrees.

Bloody battles were declared no longer necessary under this geometrical system of strategy, which could produce a bloodless verdict. If the attacker went into action with an improper base the defender would simply inform him of this, so enforcing retreat without resort to battle. Strategy was the science of warlike movement outside the line of sight or the effective range of heavy fire. Tactics was the science of warlike movement in the vicinity of the enemy, within the effective range.<sup>272</sup> Bülow explained the diminishing power of an offensive line of operation, which can be compared to the diminishing power of attack and the concept of culmination Clausewitz used in the 1820s.<sup>273</sup>

Defensive war had the advantage in Bülow's new system; the defence was the side defending freedom and the right. Clausewitz would also later view defence as the stronger form of war *per se*. Bülow had seemingly wished to make Kant's moral philosophy real, arguing: When the limited utility of aggressive war was recognized states would stay within their natural borders. When war was clarified as science and accessible to everyone, the quest for honour and reputation would disappear. Geniuses of military type would consequently lose interest in the unprofitable military trade, heavily restricted by clear rules of the possible.<sup>274</sup> In that sense, Bülow tried to eliminate the element of chance to make war predictable.

In addition Bülow envisioned a new political map of Europe. Smaller states would be absorbed by the great powers in the search for larger armies. These grand states of Europe would gain long borders and hence also long operational bases, which would hamper aggressive war. The principle of equilibrium was consequently part of the operational base. Kantian perpetual peace would be possible when war was made science and clarified by the notion of operational base, according to Bülow.

However, Bülow was quick to revise the *Kriegssystem* after Bonaparte's victory at Marengo in June 1800. The 1800 campaign was analysed in political and military senses. He stated in his Preface that he hoped the frequent connection of 'War and Politik' in the text would not annoy the reader, since the two had such an intimate

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einem ehemaligen Preußischen Offizier (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1799), 1-2. 'Es ist ein Irrtum, daß die Wissenschaft des Krieges nicht gelehrt werden müsse, weil deren Endzweck die Vernichtung des menschlichen Geschlechtes sei. Ohne sie würde der Krieg in einer Reihe zweckloser Mordthaten bestehen, die eben so unnützlich als endlos sehn würden.'

<sup>272</sup> Bülow, *Geist des Neuern Kriegssystems*, 83-84

<sup>273</sup> Bülow, *Geist des Neuern Kriegssystems*, 185-201

<sup>274</sup> Bülow, *Geist des Neuern Kriegssystems*, 202-114

relation and were almost inseparable: 'How often is not war directed through *Politik*, and not through the science of war in its doings.'<sup>275</sup>

It is enough to say for the moment that Clausewitz largely followed Bülow's idea of a scientific core of war in his quest for a theory to think strategy properly and avoid the instability of politics. Clausewitz's conceptual view of war differed however considerably, pronouncing the reciprocity of warlike energy instead of Bülow's operational patterns. Clausewitz's later reason for abandoning the quest for an independent theory of the warlike element and including *Politik* in the actual thinking of strategy – thus not only providing purpose to fighting – was a lack of coherent, discernible warlike logic close to equilibrium among other aspects, as we will see later.

Bülow's twist in 1801 was preceded by a thorough justification of the *Kriegssystem*. French success was explained by a difference in political direction and military command. Vienna had made a wrong estimate in assuming that the absence of a French war fund would prevent action. The Austrian command was also hampered by political regulations, since every movement needed clearance from Vienna. The French had deployed their major power towards the flanks of the Austrians and not towards the centre. This proved the correctness of the *Kriegssystem*. Bülow's twist was that he now recognized the great strategic manoeuvre against the rear as decisive *per se* and not the battle itself.<sup>276</sup> This can be compared to Liddell Hart's later idea of indirect approach.

Some time between autumn 1801 and 1802 Scharnhorst analysed in several texts the question of progress in the *Kriegskunst* (cf. the piquant idea of a revolution in military affairs recently) as preparation for speeches to the *Militärische Gesellschaft*. Scharnhorst recognized progress in several areas but not in the realm of strategy: '...strategy, the arrangement of campaigns, the direction of larger operations etc. The art in this important branch has not made any progress since Turenne and Montecucculi, since 1674 up to the Revolutionary Wars...'<sup>277</sup> This was an objection to the view suggested by Tempelhoff and others that the *Kriegskunst* had been perfected under Friedrich's command into a new system.<sup>278</sup>

Scharnhorst published an analysis of Marengo, which disagreed with Bülow's study. He argued that Bonaparte had given battle under the best possible military and political conditions. The French main army was concentrated just prior to the battle, prepared

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<sup>275</sup> Adam Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, *Der Feldzug von 1800 militärisch und politisch betrachtet* (Berlin: Fröhlich, 1801), XIV-XV. 'Wie oft wird nicht der Krieg durch Politik, nicht durch Kriegswissenschaft geleitet in seinen Begebenheiten.'

<sup>276</sup> Bülow, *Der Feldzug von 1800 militärisch und politisch betrachtet*, 1-19

<sup>277</sup> Scharnhorst [Berlin, October 1801?], 'Vortrag – Betrachtung über die Fortschritte in der Kriegskunst', *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 646-54; Scharnhorst [Berlin?, October 1801/1802?], 'Vortrag- Hat man bis jetzt noch immer Fortschritte in der Kriegs-Kunst gemacht?', *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 654-66, cf. 663 '...die Strategie, die Anordnung zum Feldzuge, die Leitung der Operationen in Großen usw. Die Kunst hat in diesem wichtigen Zweige seit Turenne und Montecucculi, seit 1674 bis zum Revolutionskriege nicht die Fortschritte gemacht...'

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Tempelhoff, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges in Deutschland*, Vol 1 (1783), 332

by a clever system of detachments and observation corps. Scharnhorst argued: 'The argument that one has to hold one's forces together in war, that a *Grundsatz* of the *Kriegskunst* should be not to divide, is thus false. Rather, but only for the proficient, a general rule is to divide with care, and force the enemy to do this also, and then attack single parts concentrated. The *Grundsatz* of strategy, which is the subject here, thus requires that one: never stands idle concentrated – but always fight concentrated.'<sup>279</sup> This is good example of an apt precept, which remained for a long time a lodestar in German military thought.

Scharnhorst depicted Marengo as 'a sad moment for Germany' because this campaign had to be adopted as the norm for the future. This standpoint appeared to underpin the course of Clausewitz's future way of thinking. The new French order of battle, *Schlachtordnung*, was interesting since it allowed mutual fire support between different weapons. Superior organisation had given victory to France, not any clever combination in the rear.<sup>280</sup> The adoption of all-arms formations and integrated tactics had already occupied Scharnhorst for a while.<sup>281</sup> Clausewitz observed later that these early campaigns and the rising might of Napoleon were known foremost from newspaper reports during the early 1800s.

Scharnhorst's 1803 study of the battle at Lowositz in 1756 argued polemically that the *Kriegskunst* cannot be about blind imitation. He used military history to improve military understanding in general and to study strategy in particular. The great events of war had to be thoroughly investigated from the nature of the matter (*die Natur der Sache*), which was a trademark of Scharnhorst's way of military analysis and adopted by Clausewitz. The expression is twofold; either as entity and nature of things [cf. *Wesen*] or as nature, character and peculiarity [cf. *Eigenart*]. Uncritical imitation of experience would often lead to the adoption of wrong patterns, which would lose all 'Tatkraft', i.e. inner energy (cf. Nicolai) necessary to all important events in war. Anyone who failed to realize this foundation of a military arrangement and adopt it would never be able to use time and space with advantage.<sup>282</sup> Clausewitz later in *Vom Kriege* condemned imitation severely and employed the notion of energy as imperative for strategic thought to understand warlike dynamics.

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<sup>279</sup> Scharnhorst, 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Marengo. Auf Veranlassung der in dem Werke des Herrn v. Bülow:- über den Feldzug von 1800 enthaltenen Relation', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 1:1 (Berlin: September 1802), 52-59 cf.54-55. 'Die Meinung, daß man seine Kräfte im Kriege zusammenhalten müsse; daß es ein Grundsatz der Kriegskunst sey, sich nicht zu theilen, ist also falsch. Vielmehr ist es, jedoch nur für den Geschickten, eine allgemeine Regel, sich mit Vorsicht zu vertheilen, und den Feind zu zwingen, eben dies zu thun, und dann concentrirt über einzelne Theile herzufallen. Der Grundsatz der Strategie, von welchem hier die Rede ist, verlangt also: nie concentrirt zu stehen – aber sich immer concentrirt zu schlagen.'

<sup>280</sup> Scharnhorst, *Ueber die Schlacht bei Marengo*, 57

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Scharnhorst, 'Divisionstaktik und Vorschläge zur Reorganisation der Artillerie', *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 3/6, 166-299

<sup>282</sup> Scharnhorst, 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Lowositz de 1sten Oktober 1756', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 2:2 (Berlin: May 1803), 280-92



For Bülow, however, (reasonable) strategy was a superior activity that decided everything *per se* in modern war; actual combat and tactics were consequently of minor importance. The progress of military thought itself had rendered the verdict of battle an intellectual question, not least due to the geometrical theory. As a consequence smaller forces were now able to achieve greater results, at least in theory. Clausewitz regarded these scientific aspirations as ridiculous since war was interaction. He wrote sarcastically in his notebook: 'It is a prodigious confusion of ideas when Bülow believes the *Kriegskunst* has progressed, so one can achieve greater results with fewer forces. The result of war depends on the relationship of the opponents; if this is unequal, the results are great, if it is equal they are small. It is so for the cannibals as well as for us.'<sup>283</sup> In the same manner, Julius Venturini's account of tactics and strategy was refuted. Venturini proposed the conduct of war could be understood without troops and armies from the principles of pure mathematics.<sup>284</sup> Clausewitz wrote ironically in his notebook that mathematics can do as much for the art of war as a sermon can.<sup>285</sup>

The most respected and widely read critic of Friedrich's military heritage was perhaps Georg Heinrich von Berenhorst (1733-1814). In the seminal *Betrachtungen über die Kriegskunst* (1797-1799) he attributed a primary role to moral forces in warfare.<sup>286</sup> He pointed here to the limited possibility of theorising military activity and success. In a bitter statement, he depicted the Prussian problem strikingly as: 'the French and Prussian generals divided the art of war between them; the Prussians took the former and the French the latter.'<sup>287</sup>

Berenhorst countered his critics and clarified his arguments in 1802.<sup>288</sup> Scharnhorst, however, was not fond of Berenhorst and wrote a critical review of this piece in 1804, maybe fuelled by antipathy to the severe criticism of Friedrich's conduct of war.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie – 23. Geist der Kriegskunst', *Schriften* (1979), 1-61, cf. 36. 'Es ist also eine gewaltige Ideenkonfusion, wenn Bülow glaubt, die Kriegskunst sei *fortgeschritten*, wenn man mit weniger Kräften größere Resultate hervorbringe. Die Kriegsresultate hängen von dem Verhältnisse der Gegner ab; ist dieses ungleich, so sind die Resultate groß, ist dies gleich so sind sie klein. So ist es bei den Kannibalen wie uns.'

<sup>284</sup> Johann Georg Julius Venturini, *Lehrbuch der angewandten Taktik oder eigentlichen Kriegswissenschaften*, 6 Vols (Schleswig: 1798-1801)

<sup>285</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie', *Schriften* (1979), 1-62, cf. 6

<sup>286</sup> Georg Heinrich v. Berenhorst, *Betrachtungen über die Kriegskunst, ueber ihre widerspruche und ihre zuverlässigkeit* (Leipzig: Fleicher, 1798); *Ibid.*, *Aphorismen* (Leipzig: Fleicher, 1805); see also reprint *Ibid.*, *Betrachtungen über die Kriegskunst*, Neudruck der 3. Aufl. Leipzig 1827 (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1978)

<sup>287</sup> Cited in Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 157

<sup>288</sup> Georg Heinrich v. Berenhorst, *Betrachtungen über einige Unrichtigkeiten in den Betrachtungen über die Kriegskunst über ihre Fortschritte, ihre widerspruche und ihre zuverlässigkeit*. (Berlin: Nicolai, 1802)

<sup>289</sup> Scharnhorst, 'Nothwendige Randglossen zu den Betrachtungen über einige Unrichtigkeiten in den Betrachtungen über die Kriegskunst, über ihre Fortschritte, ihre Widerspruche und ihre Zuverlässigkeit', *Neues Militärisches Journal*, Vol 12:23-24 (Hannover, 1804), 344-58. Also printed in Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 165-71

That may explain Clausewitz's very few references to him. Scharnhorst devoted a set of studies to Friedrich's battles and conduct of war addressed to the *Militärische Gesellschaft* 1803-1804, seemingly to balance the many views ranging between failure and greatest military art.<sup>290</sup>

Bülow and other similar military thinkers were refuted as well as accepted. The current military change was difficult to grasp, so fresh ideas and clear guidelines were looked for. In addition, the moral discourse had a profound impact on military thought. Lieutenant-general Ernst von Rüchel (1754-1823) addressed the *Militärische Gesellschaft* on Foundation Day 23 February 1803. His speech reflected fairly well Kant's ideals as well as the appreciation of progress and perfection as way-pointing ideas:

Man in general, Gentlemen, should soon according to the primordial principle [*Urprinzip*] of morality, which puts caution with wisdom in the artistic compositions of mankind, seek to make himself more perfect, and promote its fortune. Man becomes more perfect through correct concept and enlightenment of the things around him, by the expansion of knowledge, as faculty as foundation to action; - but, Gentlemen, man becomes better, more useful, only in the tendency of morality – by the unlimited power of a good, noble, loving will of people – by the extension of his knowledge for the general good – by action for the general good.<sup>291</sup>

Rüchel spoke about the *Urprinzip*, the primordial principle of morality. Clausewitz was to speak similarly about the *Urbestimmung* of war for strategic thought. The belief in going back to roots for first principles was common. Further, to establish 'clear concepts' as a way to better understanding was typical of the Enlightenment, viewpoints Clausewitz also endorsed. His writings during the reform era sought to explore true concepts for the *Kriegskunst*. As well as this being a feature of the time it

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<sup>290</sup> See for example Scharnhorst, 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Lowositz de 1sten Oktober 1756', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 2:2 (Berlin: May 1803), 280-92; 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Prag, den 6ten Mai 1757', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 3:1 (Berlin: August 1803), 45-59; 'Ueber die Schlacht bei Collin den 18sten Junius 1757', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 3:2 (Berlin: November 1803) 'Schlacht bei Breslau, den 22sten November 1757'; 'Schlacht bei Leuthen den 5. November 1757', *Denkwürdigkeiten der militärischen Gesellschaft in Berlin*, Vol 4:1 (Berlin: February 1804), 67-88

<sup>291</sup> Generalleutnant Rüchel, 24 January 1803, speech to *militärische Gesellschaft* on the founding day, printed in *Denkwürdigkeiten der Militärischen gesellschaft zu Berlin*, Vol 2:1 (Berlin: Wegener, February 1803), 2. 'Der Mensch, meine Herren, im allgemeinen, soll schon, nach dem Urprinzip der Moral, welche Vorsicht mit Weisheit in die künstliche kompositionen seiner Menschheit legte, suchen, sich vollkommner zu machen, und sein Glück befördern. Vollkommner wird der Mensch durch richtigen Begriff und Aufklärung der Dinge um sich her, durch die Erweiterung seiner Kenntnisse, als Fakultät, als Grundlage zur Handlung; - aber, meine Herren, besser, nutzbarer wird der Mensch nur, in moralischer Tendenz, - durch unbegrenzte Kraft eines guten, edlen, die Menschen liebenden Willens – durch die richtige Anwendung seiner Kenntnisse zum allgemeinen wohl – durch Handlung für das allgemeine Beste.---

was rooted in a serious concern for the discrepancy between Prussian military beliefs and Napoleonic realities. The notebook on strategy depicted this concern clearly:

Machiavelli argued that one has to adjust one's measures according to time and circumstances. This is not a triviality, because it does not refer to detail, but to measures in general, where nothing is so common as complete forgetfulness of every rule [of thought]. Governments tend to choose their commanders without taking time and circumstances into consideration and the commanders do not improve matters with their *Kriegssystem*. This *Kriegssystem* is nothing but a digression from their way of thinking, and almost never a course selected in free consideration [of circumstances].<sup>292</sup>

For Clausewitz clear thinking about the conduct of war was that its focal point was combat. Authorities such as Machiavelli and Montecucculi had previously stressed the importance of battle. Raimondo Montecucculi (1609-1680) was Scharnhorst's favourite military inspiration and he always carried the field marshal's work with him.<sup>293</sup> Consequently, Clausewitz argued that the idea of combat underpinned every action in war. In fact much of his later writings were concerned to prove this basic view of the theoretical status of combat.<sup>294</sup> The result of combat was the cash of military trade for political bargaining to peace again. The moment of transition from war to peace was strikingly depicted as *Wechselhandel*, barter, which gives a hint of how Clausewitz perceived the relation of politics and military achievements. Bonaparte had seemingly achieved disproportional success and people's imaginative fear had made him appear stronger than he really was. In 1804 Clausewitz's outlined the *Geist* of the *Kriegskunst*, what it really was about in to his opinion:

Everything in war depends on combat [*Gefecht*], occurring either as really occurring or just partly intentional or even only feigned. Combat is to strategy, what ready money is to the barter [*Wechselhandel*]. Moderately successful combats can occasionally provide commanders with more success than really they should [cf. Bonaparte], just as a moderate fortune can often provide a merchant with a substantially greater credit than he can accommodate. But a person who lacks fortune [cf. Prussia], cannot draw a bill, and anyone who does not know how to

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<sup>292</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie – 5. Über die allgemeinen Maßregeln', *Schriften* (1979), 1-61, cf.10. 'Machiavelli behauptet, man müsse seine Maßregeln der Zeit und den Umständen anmessen. Eine Trivialität ist dies nicht, denn es bezieht sich nicht auf das Detail, sondern auf die allgemeinen Maßregeln, wo nichts so gewöhnlich ist als ein gänzliches Vergessen jener Regel. So pflegen die Regierungen ihre Feldherren ohne Rücksicht auf Zeit und Umstände zu wählen, und die Feldherren machen es nicht besser mit ihrem Kriegssystem. Dies Kriegssystem ist ein bloßer Ausfluß seiner Denk- und Empfindungsweise und fast nie eine mit freier Überlegung gewählte Bahn.'

<sup>293</sup> Stadelmann, Scharnhorst, 92. See *Besondere und geheime Kriegsnachrichten des Fürsten Raymondi Montecuculi* (Leipzig: Weidmannischen Buchladen, 1736)

<sup>294</sup> See for example the opening of Book 8, written in 1827, which is analysed in chapter 12 of the present work.

fight can manoeuvre himself dead without the slightest success. One sees from this how foolish are the views of Bülow, Dumas and their associates on the value of combat nowadays. But a man who is too impressed by these names, that he trusts his own reason more than theirs [cf. Kant], who considers two authorities of highest rank: Montecuccoli, when he in his *Kriegskunst* says: *s'imaginer de faire de grandes conquêtes sans combatte c'est un projet chimérique* [imagine to make great achievements without combats is a pipedream]; and on Bonaparte's campaigns.<sup>295</sup>

Bülow's re-revised *Kriegssystem* (1805) outlined a set of eleven even more detailed theorems to capture strategy scientifically as geometry.<sup>296</sup> The first military text Clausewitz published was a blistering anonymous review of this work in the journal *Neue Bellona*, 1805.<sup>297</sup> Bülow had continued to argue that combat would no longer decide and consequently battles would not be fought anymore. Bülow argued: 'The perfection (*Vollkommenheit*) of an operation will be greater the greater the angle is which the lines of operations make together towards the object of operations.'<sup>298</sup> The commander's strategic estimate was consequently more concerned with logistical support than with what to achieve. Clausewitz pointed out the author's poor way of proving his theory and his weak case-study methodology. 'The author finds confirmation of his theory everywhere in history: the operations of good success were also always well-based.'<sup>299</sup> The review also presented Clausewitz's lifelong definition of

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<sup>295</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie – 21. Geist der Kriegskunst', *Schriften* (1979), 1-61, cf.35 . 'Alles beruht im Kriege auf dem Gefecht, was entweder wirklich vorgefallen oder bloß von einem Teil beabsichtigt oder gar nur vorgespielt ist. Das Gefecht ist also für die Strategie, was das bare Geld für den Wechselhandel ist. Mehrere glückliche Gefechte können einem Feldherrn zuweilen mehr Erfolge verschaffen als sie eigentlich sollten, gerade so wie ein gewisses Vermögen dem Kaufmann oft einen viel Größeren Kredit verschafft, als er verbürgen kann. Aber wer gar kein Vermögen hat, kann auch keine Wechsel stellen, und wer gar nicht zu fechten versteht, könnte sich tot manövrieren ohne geringsten Erfolg. Hieraus sieht man, wie albern die Meinung von Bülow Dumas und Konsorten ist über den Wert des Gefechtes heutzutage. Wem aber dergleichen Namen zu sehr imponieren, um seiner eigenen Vernunft mehr zu trauen als ihnen, der denke an zwei Autoritäten von höchstem Range: an Montecuccoli, wenn er in seiner Kriegskunst sagt: *s'imaginer de faire de grandes conquêtes sans combatte c'est un projet chimérique*, und an Bonapartes Feldzüge.'

<sup>296</sup> Adam Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, *Lehrsätze des neuern Krieges, oder reine und angewandte Strategie aus dem Geist des neuern Kriegssystem hergeleitet* (Berlin: Fröhlich, 1805)

<sup>297</sup> Anonymus [Clausewitz], 'Bemerkungen über reine und angewandte Strategie des Herrn von Bülow oder Kritik der darin enthaltenen Ansichten', *Neue Bellona*, Vol 9:3 (1805), 252-287. I refer to the reprint in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1979), 63-88

<sup>298</sup> Bülow cited in Clausewitz [1805], 'Bemerkungen über reine und angewandte Strategie', 63-88, cf. 72. 'Die Vollkommenheit einer Operation ist um so größer, je größer der Winkel ist, welchen die Operationslinien am Objekt mit einander machen.'

<sup>299</sup> Clausewitz [1805], 'Bemerkungen über reine und angewandte Strategie', 63-88, cf. 83. 'Der Verfasser findet überall in der Geschichte eine Bestätigung seiner Theorie; er findet überall: *die Operationen welche von gutem Erfolg waren, waren auch gut basiert.*'

*Kriegskunst* in terms of tactics and strategy, first indicated in his notes of 1804 and very significant to his military outlook:

Strategy is nothing without combat; because combat is the material strategy makes use of, the means it makes use of. As tactics is the use of fighting forces in combat, strategy is the use of combat, - i.e. the combination of individual combats into a whole, to the final [political] purpose of the war. – All that strategy can do is to direct individual combats to appropriate points at the right time in the best possible circumstances [cf. Scharnhorst's view of Bonaparte at Marengo]. On the one hand strategy works closely to facilitate the possibilities for tactical performance; on the other it obtains the success of combat – the result. Only with good [tactical] success can strategy achieve its final [political] purpose, obviously not with bad results; and if one desires success, obviously one has to know how to fight! <sup>300</sup>

Clausewitz's verdict was hard. Bülow's scientific aspiration was ridiculous and a pure speculation, but important to clarify due to the undeserved attention his ideas have gained. The presentation was a rhapsody without stringent reasoning. Clausewitz's tone was remarkably self-confident and he labelled Bülow a '*militarischen Kinderfreund*', since his simplification made every novice into a military expert in a few hours of study. He ironically ended the review by stating that Bülow's result was on a child's level and one could only hope his admirers would realize this.

#### ON THE ROAD TO JENA AND AUERSTEDT

Clausewitz was promoted to *Stabskapitän* in November 1805. To catch up with the new French manner of war he wrote a short essay in simple French. <sup>301</sup> French had long been the international military language, but Clausewitz wrote only a few texts in this language. He stated explicitly in his later work that he excluded foreign terms to make his presentation clearer. There had been a dispute in the *Militärische Gesellschaft* about publishing outspoken military texts available even to potential enemies. Scharnhorst had argued that the French did not bother and could hardly speak German like Germans could speak French. <sup>302</sup> These early writings concerned to a great extent

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<sup>300</sup> Clausewitz [1805], 'Bemerkungen über reine und angewandte Strategie', 63-88, cf. 77-78. 'Die Strategie ist *nichts* ohne das Gefecht; denn das Gefecht ist der Stoff, dessen sie sich bedient, das Mittel was sie anwendet. So wie die Taktik der Gebrauch der Streitkräfte im Gefecht ist, so ist die Strategie der Gebrauch des Gefechtes, - d.h. die Verbindung der einzelnen Gefechte zu einem Ganzen, zu dem Endzweck des Krieges. – Alles, was die Strategie thun kann, ist, daß sie die einzelnen Gefechte auf zweckmäßigen Punkten zur rechten Zeit, und unter so günstigen Umständen als möglich angiebt. Bis dahin arbeitet sie der Taktik in die Hände, aus den Händen der Taktik aber erhält sie den Erfolg des Gefechtes – das Resultat. – Nur mit guten Erfolgen kann sie ihren Zweck erreichen, nicht mit schlechten, das versteht sich; und will man gute Erfolge, so muss man zu fechten wissen, das versteht sich auch!'

<sup>301</sup> Clausewitz [1805], 'Considérations sur la manière de faire la guerre à la France', *Schriften* (1966), 58-63

<sup>302</sup> Scharnhorst, [Berlin?, second half of 1804?] 'Denkschrift', *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 4/6, 250-55

the individuality of strategic performance and the shift of success by arms (*Wechsel des Waffenglücks*), concerned with the increasing power of France.

In the second half of 1805 the political situation in Europe deteriorated. A Third Coalition was formed among Britain, Austria and Russia to limit French preponderance and restore the European balance of power to the state of 1789. Napoleon crossed the Rhine in mid- September and launched a campaign in the German territories towards the river Danube. This terminated in a French victory over the Austrian Army commanded by General Mack at Ulm in the middle of October 1805. This success was utilized to force battle onto the combined Russian-Austrian army under the command of Tsar Alexander at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805. Austerlitz became Bonaparte's 'finest victory' in his own words; it ruined the Third Coalition and confirmed French hegemony over the European mainland exactly twelve months after he had been appointed Emperor.<sup>303</sup>

Clausewitz met his wife-to-be Marie in Berlin social life now and then at dinners, receptions and banquets during 1804-1805.<sup>304</sup> Finally Marie acknowledged her feelings for the reserved Carl. Even if Prussia remained neutral, partial mobilisation was decided upon. According to Marie's notes these circumstances prompted her to express her feelings before Clausewitz became remote, deployed with the Field Army. Her opportunity came on 3 December 1805 when the two bumped into each other in a small shop outside the Royal Palace. Clausewitz's battalion had just completed a routine inspection and a parade in the wide street outside. Their meeting became an electric moment, a quiet confirmation of their bond.<sup>305</sup>

They did not marry until 17 December 1810 due to different social positions and Clausewitz's duties, which for several periods kept him away from Berlin. The Brühl family lacked a fortune but upheld a prominent position in Berlin society. Marie's father had been promoted general a couple of years before his death in 1802. Her mother was a confident woman, strictly noble and well aware of her family's social position. It took a while before she accepted their relationship, but their correspondence meanwhile expressed love and sensitivity, often supplemented by small poems. Marie was educated in the manner of girls from good families; fluent in English and French as well as German. She was gifted in art and music; had a profound interest in literature and a sensitive pen: in that sense a true exponent of her time.

The Enlightenment shifted into Romanticism in German culture after the French Revolution and the change continued till around the Revolution of 1848. Romantic thought favoured intuition, imagination and feelings before cold rationalisation of nature and great systems. Romantic ideas were more about embodied personalities animated by love and hate. In that sense Clausewitz and Marie shared a passionate contempt or even hatred of Napoleon and French manners. That feeling was shared by

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<sup>303</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 381-439

<sup>304</sup> On their early relation see Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 98-110; Schramm, *Clausewitz Leben und Werk*, 88-101

<sup>305</sup> Marie's notes their on their early acquaintance; printed in *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz. Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, Hg. Karl Linnebach (Berlin: Wared, 1916), 39-52; also in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 175-95

Marie's mother, who was English by birth. Romantic thought has been characterized as replacing a mechanical understanding of nature and causation with an organic one.<sup>306</sup> This description applied to Clausewitz's thinking as well. Attack was part of defence and vice-versa. Moral forces were inseparable from physical and so on. Clausewitz read Schiller, Goethe and Herder – all exponents of early German Romanticism.<sup>307</sup>

Most of Clausewitz's historical accounts were studies of individual commanders and their particular strategies in different campaigns. So he followed the ideal of individualism typical to Romantic thought and placed the living individual's performance at the centre of his study. His first major strategic study was devoted to the campaigns of the Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus 1630-1632.<sup>308</sup> Bülow published a set of biographies on Great Captains 1801-1805 and the piece on Gustavus Adolphus appeared in 1805. Clausewitz seemingly wrote his study at this time, perhaps as a quiet response.<sup>309</sup> The interest in the Swedish king and his campaigns was reflected in a wealth of literature, which Clausewitz employed as sources.

Clausewitz opened by pointing out the brilliant Swedish strategic estimate prior to the intervention in Germany in 1630. He regarded this estimate (*das Raisonnement... über die Natur dieses Krieges*) as insufficiently noticed in the literature. He devoted the first part of the study to the Swedish manner of strategic reasoning. 'The nature of this war' was here the particular foundation for going to war and developing the offensive in Germany. This choice of offensive in Germany had been justified enough in the literature.

An important aspect of the Swedish political purpose for going to war was to weaken the power of the Habsburg Emperor. Clausewitz observed the integration of political and military conditions truthfully and logically, which led to a firm course of action. Clausewitz saw in Gustavus Adolphus a leader who combined the realities of war and politics in successful action. This was a sharp contrast to Prussian politics and military high command at the time when Clausewitz was writing. He referred to the *Grundsatz* known to all 'sensible Generals' that a war must sustain itself. This was an implicit criticism of Tempelhoff's supply theory, suggesting that an army could not operate further than approximately 75 kilometres in front of the depot system.<sup>310</sup>

It was a mistake, Clausewitz wrote, to view the Thirty Years' War as barbarism, as alien events prior to cultural progress and prior to the developed Art (*entfalteten Kunst*),

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<sup>306</sup> See Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe*, 1-14

<sup>307</sup> Hahlweg, *Clausewitz: Soldat-Politiker-Denker*, 10-11

<sup>308</sup> Clausewitz [1805-06], 'Gustav Adolph Feldzüge von 1630-1632', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 3-106. The first editor Gröben dated the work to Clausewitz's youth (Preface, *Werke* 9/10, V); Caemmerer dated the work to the turn of the century (Caemmerer, *Clausewitz*, 77); Rothfels dated the text to prior of Jena (Rothfels, *Clausewitz Krieg und Politik*, 61); Paret followed Caemmerer and interpreted the work to have been made during the first years in Berlin (Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 85-88); In the essay 'The Genesis of On War' he stated about 1805 (*On War*, 12).

<sup>309</sup> Adam Dietrich Heinrich von Bülow, *Biographien berühmter Helden neuerer Zeit. Vorzüglich für junge Offiziere, und die Söhne des Adels, die zum Militär Dienste bestimmt sind*, 4 Vols (Berlin: Limburgischen Buchhandlung 1801-1805)

<sup>310</sup> Clausewitz [1805-06], 'Gustav Adolph Feldzüge von 1630-1632', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 3-106, cf. 15

thus the military unfolding of *Kriegskunst*. He observed that cultural progress had made many less humane and barbaric military traditions disappear, inducing a loss of military precepts. The strategy pursued was, however, first-class and an example to learn from. Clausewitz thus observed already in his first study the impact of general progress on military thought: that war was intellectually removed from its violent primordial origins in the belief in moral progress. This standpoint he would return to after Waterloo, in writing *Vom Kriege*.<sup>311</sup>

He also wrote an overview of the Thirty Years' War, with an observation that the great wars form epochs in the art of war dependent on their context. It was therefore necessary to study the history of war broadly, which followed Scharnhorst's view; otherwise there was a risk of getting lost in the current point of view dominating the way of military thinking and seeing current conditions as the only truth.<sup>312</sup>

Scharnhorst wrote a piece on the use and deficient use of military history in 1806.<sup>313</sup> The experience of war influenced the *Kriegskunst*, but this art – the command of armies – had not progressed to the same extent as other sciences. In many aspects the art of war was still in its infancy due to its dependence on context, to individual physical, moral and technological aspects and their temporary matters. This clearly resembled Clausewitz's description above, which might suggest a connection in time. Strategy, the command of armies, could not be learned in systematic textbooks like mathematics or engineering. If one thought so, one was stuck in a dream. Military history was the best platform to learn strategy from, but history should not be a heroic account of an individual but a study of performance integrated in context, even if that was hard to achieve. Scharnhorst objected to contemporary military historians, theorists, who selectively analysed Great Captains to propound general principles of *Kriegskunst*:

The historian can choose his moments in which to let his hero appear; we see him therefore always in parade clothes, and where he would like to be seen. We love to be dazzled; the historian therefore does well if he always lets us know the personality of his hero, because here is a wider field of delusion to explore...Perhaps the historian fears that a too-precise dissection would possibly do harm to the beautiful... so it would be impossible to discover the true circumstances, causes and consequences.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Clausewitz [1805-06], 'Gustav Adolph Feldzüge von 1630-1632', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 3-106, cf. 19-20

<sup>312</sup> Clausewitz [1805-06?], 'Ansichten aus der Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges', unpublished manuscript cited in Rothfels, *Clausewitz Krieg und Politik*, 63-64. See reference also on the list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* 1889, printed in *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74

<sup>313</sup> Scharnhorst [1806], 'Nutzen der militärischen Geschichte; Ursache ihres Mangels', Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 197-207

<sup>314</sup> Scharnhorst [1806], 'Nutzen der militärischen Geschichte; Ursache ihres Mangels', Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 197-207, cf. 203. 'Der Geschichtschreiber kann sich die Augenblicke wählen, in welchen er seinen Helden erscheinen lassen will; wir sehen ihn daher nur immer im Parade-Kleide, und da wo er gesehen seyn will. Wir mögen gerne getäuscht seyn;



This non-heroic view of military-historical study: to learn strategy from both mistakes and successes was adopted and continued by Clausewitz. Prussia had to accept a mutual trust agreement with France after Austerlitz. Napoleon was to be seen as the 'protector' of the German States. The humiliation induced a discreet Prussian movement for war in the spring of 1806, involving among others Scharnhorst. As a member of the *Generalquartiermeisterstab* he had been responsible for prudent war planning since March 1804. This organisation was the predecessor to the general staff and headed by the old Lieutenant-general Levin von Geusau (1734-1808). Prussia was divided into three theatres of war. Scharnhorst was entrusted to head the important Western Theatre against France. Colonel Karl von Phull (1757-1826) was responsible to prepare the Theatre of Eastern Prussia against Russia. Colonel Christian *Freiherr* von Massenbach (1758-1827) headed the Southern Theatre against Austria and was also the architect of the new system of general staff divided into three brigades or branches.

The three heads of theatre recognized the need for a modern staff, but their military outlooks and strategic perspectives were different indeed. Phull was considered as cunning, difficult and sarcastic; Massenbach as aware of his reputation and sanguine.<sup>315</sup> Massenbach was interested in mathematics and engineering, an advocate of 'systematic revue tactics', which did not recognise the free development of combat as the core of warfare. Historical examples were employed as models for conduct, as clever patterns of marches and positions, similar to Bülow's. Massenbach was a prolific military writer and tried to systematise the conduct of war into a science built on mathematics and philosophy. He considered Austria and Russia as the main enemies and advocated a coalition with Bonaparte to form a North-German Federation headed by Prussia.<sup>316</sup> Phull and Massenbach were confident in Prussia's military ability. They did not recognize that the present change of society was affecting military institutions as Scharnhorst did.

In a memorandum in April 1806 Scharnhorst argued for the urgent need to involve and arm the people in a *Nationalmiliz* to counter French preponderance. He considered this the only possible way to create some sort of military equilibrium. The sheer weight of numbers would bring difficulties for an attacker to sustain a war of submission (*Unterjochungskrieg*). He wanted to interweave society and the army in the defence of the small state. In doing so he sought to reintroduce the energy from the people into warfare. He expressed this simply as; '...to win or to die. This alone decides now between submission and freedom.'<sup>317</sup>

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der Geschichtschreiber thut daher wohl, wenn er uns immer mit der Persohn seines Helden beschäftigt, weil er hier ein weites Feld zur Täuschung findet...Vielleicht fürchtet der Geschichtschreiber, daß zu genaue Zergliederung den Eindruck des Schönen schaden könne...so daß es unmöglich wird, die wahren Umstände, Ursachen und Folgen zu entdecken.'

<sup>315</sup> Hornung, *Scharnhorst*, 95

<sup>316</sup> Stefan Hartmann, 'Massenbach, Christian Freiherr von', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 16 (1990), 358 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119371332.html> accessed 3 June 2012

<sup>317</sup> Gerhard von Scharnhorst [April 1806], 'Ein dem Genaral-adjutant v. Kleist und Herzog von Braunschweig übergebenes Memoire', printed in Colmar von der Goltz, *Von Rossbach bis*

The memorandum concluded by criticizing the current Prussian inclination to value the *Kriegskunst* higher than *militärischen Tugend*, i.e. that the belief in an enigmatic art of command was made substitute for straightforward military virtues. Courage, steadfastness and readiness to sacrifice had in all times been the firm base for a people's independence in Scharnhorst's opinion.<sup>318</sup> Clausewitz's 1804 notebook on strategy referred to the patriotic historian Johannes von Müller's observation that the *Kriegskunst* was more public, at home with the people, in older times. He observed that this had been stated by Machiavelli earlier.<sup>319</sup> Scharnhorst and Clausewitz shared the same view of public armament, thus necessary to cope with the dimensions of potential enemies. They did not fear revolution from raising citizen soldiers; instead they regarded this institution as a more trustworthy and powerful instrument of defence than mercenaries, as Machiavelli had done.

In a letter to General Rüchel in April 1806 Scharnhorst pondered the strategic options for Prussia. He pointed to the dilemma of the present neutrality and explicated two courses of action. First he predicted that Napoleon would treat Prussia with arrogance, since this behaviour had matured into his and his ministers' nature. Secondly he anticipated that France would continue to expand her power and make territorial demands at Prussia's expense. This would force Prussia into war with the enemies of France or with France herself.

Due to Prussia's geographical conditions and lack of natural defensive frontiers, a war of defence within border was out of the question. Prussia lacked all aspects that could achieve large purposes in such a type of war. In 1812 Clausewitz would argue for the possibility of conducting an active defensive war inside Prussia, thus opposing his teacher's view. Scharnhorst ended the letter by telling Rüchel that he hated the French. Prussia had to abandon neutrality and join one side, a reaction similar to Machiavelli's principal refutation of neutrality in *The Prince*:<sup>320</sup>

A ruler is also highly regarded if he is either a true ally or an outright enemy, that is, if he unhesitatingly supports one ruler against another. This policy is always better than remaining neutral, since if two powerful rulers near you come to blows, either the eventual victor will become a threat to you, or he will not. In either situation, it will always be wiser to intervene in favour of one side and fight strongly. For in the former situation, if you do not declare yourself, you will always be liable to be despoiled by the victor (which would please and satisfy the loser), and you will deservedly be defenceless and friendless. For the victor does not want unreliable allies who did not help him when he was hard pressed; and the loser will not show you any favour, because you did not want the risk of sharing his fate by assisting him militarily.<sup>321</sup>

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*Jena und Auerstedt Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des preußischen Heers*, zweite Auflage (Berlin: Mittler, 1906), 543-49, cf. 544. Also printed in Scharnhorst, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 189-96

<sup>318</sup> Scharnhorst [April 1806], 'Ein dem Genaral-adjutant v. Kleist und Herzog von Braunschweig übergebenes Memoire', 543-49, cf. 548-49.

<sup>319</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Stategie' in *Schriften*, (1979), 10

<sup>320</sup> Scharnhorst to General v. Rüchel, Braunschweig 16 April 1806, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 181-85

<sup>321</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 77-78; see also Machiavelli, *Regierungskunst eines Fürsten*, 174

The Holy Roman Empire, founded in 962, ceased formally to exist in July 1806. At the same time the *Rheinbund*, or *Confédération du Rhin*, was founded among the small German states such as Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden, driven by French policy and diplomacy. All members had to recognize the supremacy of Imperial France. This type of political arrangement had been employed in older times as a means to secure French control of German affairs. At the same time Napoleon offered Britain Hanover in return for settling peace terms. These measures were unacceptable to Prussia, even for the reluctant Friedrich Wilhelm III. The Prussian Government decided in secrecy to go to war with France on 7 August 1806.

Napoleon and Clausewitz had apparently the same view of Friedrich Wilhelm at this time - indecisive and lacking in moral fibre. The former could hardly believe the first intelligence indicating war in September. France had then about 160,000 troops in Southern Germany, which was fewer than the Prussian Army fully mobilized and concentrated. The Duke of Brunswick (1735-1806) was appointed commander of the combined Prussian-German army. He was by then an old man, promoted Prussian field-marshal back in 1787 and reactivated from long retirement since the debacle of the First Coalition of 1794. Scharnhorst had already in 1797 compared the performance of young revolutionary commanders with the much older generals in the established armies.<sup>322</sup>

The twin battle at Jena and Auerstedt started early in the morning of 14 October 1806. It was preceded by wrong estimations of the situation on both sides.<sup>323</sup> Clausewitz's notes three days before the battle revealed mistrust in Prussian strategy.<sup>324</sup> Scharnhorst's letters to his daughter depicted a chaotic situation in the Prussian High Command; disputes, no proper general staff to provide direction, unclear command and obviously many people who hated the Duke.<sup>325</sup>

Clausewitz experienced the battle at Auerstedt. Prince August had to take command of a fairly large force in the unfolding of events and Clausewitz commanded the disengagement of his battalion. This would be the largest direct tactical battle-command he ever conducted, part of the general retreat commenced in the afternoon.<sup>326</sup> The subsequent French pursuit was bloody and the Prussian system of

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<sup>322</sup> Scharnhorst [1797], 'Über Führerauswahl und Führerverantwortlichkeit', *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 113-16. Noticeably published for the first time in *Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, Issue no. 2 (1944), 117-19

<sup>323</sup> On the battle see David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Scriber, 1966), 443-508

<sup>324</sup> Clausewitz, note 'Kantonnements-Quartier Tennstedt bei Weimar 12 Oktober 1806', Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1/2 45-8

<sup>325</sup> Scharnhorst to Julie v. Scharnhorst, 6 to 9 October 1806, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 4/6, 342-45

<sup>326</sup> About Clausewitz in the battle see: Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 125-26

fortresses capitulated one after the other almost without fighting.<sup>327</sup> The Prussian state imploded and Napoleon entered Berlin as victor on 27 October 1806.

On the following day Prince August and Clausewitz had to surrender near Prenzlau, the old garrison town in Brandenburg, 100 kilometres north of Berlin on the road to the Baltic coast, commanding a rearguard of 240 soldiers. This area was considered part of the *Kernland* of old Prussia, thus as 'core territory' of the monarchy. The two were permitted to stay in Berlin on parole until the end of the year. Clausewitz wrote a short text on the surrender and his tactical impressions. He observed here the strength of infantry against cavalry.<sup>328</sup> His moral-patriotic-political sentiments emerged in an article written when he was about to leave Berlin for captivity in France.

Far away from that unprincipled pitifulness, which so many people are not ashamed of, and to put my former judgement in correspondence with the success, I confess outspokenly: I and we all desired this war and did not consider a fortunate success impossible. We nurtured the most beautiful hopes; because hardly has any army bought more noble glory with its blood, as it was this should have saved the honour, the freedom, the happiness of citizens in the German nation. But from the other side in vain self-confidence we were far from spotting the rocks on which our hopes could be shattered, and many among us had felt this with great worries. Now the magnificent hopes, the entire beautiful relation between us and Germany are annihilated [*vernichtet*]; we are deprived of our happiness as citizens, our career is closed to us, our forces lie idle, and the unfair judgement of all Europe weighs heavy upon us. So we need double courage to bear the misfortune of the nation and the disgrace of the time. And so I would to urge all Germans: honour yourselves, that is, have no doubt in our destiny.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> The Prussian system of fortresses surrendered in the following order: Erfurt (October 16), Spandau (October 25), Stettin (October 29), Küstrin (November 1), and Magdeburg (November 8).

<sup>328</sup> Clausewitz [November-December 1806?], note to the Denkschrift on 1806, printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1/2, 54-62

<sup>329</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz] 'Historische Briefe über die großen Kriegsereignisse 1806', *Minerva*, Hg. J.W. von Archenholtz, Vol 1:2 (1807), No. 1, 1-21; No.2, 193-209; No.4, 1-26. I refer to the reprint in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1979), 95-125, cf. 125-26. 'Weit entfernt mit jener charakterlosen Erbärmlichkeit, deren sich so viele Menschen nicht schämen, mein ehemaliges Urtheil in Uebereinstimmung mit dem Erfolg zu setzen, gestehe ich freymütig: ich und wir alle haben den Krieg gewünscht, und einen glücklichen Erfolg nicht für unmöglich gehalten. Wir haben die schönsten Hoffnungen in uns genährt; denn nie hat wohl eine Armee einen edleren Ruhm mit ihrem Blut erkaufte, als der gewesen wäre, die Ehre, die Freyheit, das Bürgerglück der Deutschen Nation gerettet zu haben. Aber vom der anderen Seite sind wir weit entfernt gewesen, in eitlem Selbstvertrauen nicht die Klippen zu sehen, an die unsere Hoffnungen scheitern könnten, und manchen unter uns hat dies mit tieferem Kummer erfüllt. Jetzt sind die herrlichen Hoffnungen, das ganze schöne verhältniß zwischen uns und Deutschland vernichtet; wir sind unseres bürgerlichen Glücks beraubt, unsere Laufbahn ist uns verschlossen, unsere Kräfte liegen müßig, und lastend ruht das ungerechte Urtheil von ganz Europas auf uns. So bedürfen wir wohl doppelten Muthes, um mit der Nation das Unglück und die Schande der Zeit zu tragen! Und doch möchte ich allen Deutschen zurufen: Ehret euch selbst, das ist: verzweifelt nicht an eurem Schicksal!'

This was a first account of the catastrophe, which was published as three letters in the journal *Minerva* during the winter of 1807. He ended the third letter, apparently written in the middle of February in France, with a patriotic appeal to all Germans, thus not only to the people of Prussia. He encouraged the reader to believe in the future and work against moral collapse and disintegration. A small uprising had in fact already occurred in Hessen in late December, which however was brutally repressed in two weeks by the French army. The evil feeling of being overthrown clearly influenced Clausewitz's way of theorizing strategy later. But in the moment of despair he expressed hope to his fellow-Germans.

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This chapter has addressed Clausewitz's ideas and deeds from the start of his military *Bildung* under Scharnhorst's supervision to his testimony of defeat in 1807. It has pointed out disconnected visions and realities – politically, morally and militarily as one impetus for his future theorizing. By implication, Clausewitz's situation depicts the perennial dilemma of might and right in military thought from its political and moral roots. This experience indicates a reason for his later way of theorizing, to his devotion to make theory for strategic thought realistic and consequently also elastic.

It has been clarified that most of Clausewitz's basic understanding of strategy and tactics was present in military thought prior to him. However, he emphasized the role of combat more strongly than others did. He deeply refuted the popular view of combat as outdated and less important in enlightened times. This theoretical conflict became integral to his ideas. He wanted to prove the fundamental theoretical status of combat, more precisely the idea of combat, for apt thinking about the art of war, from his first notes on strategy here demonstrated straight on to the final parts of *Vom Kriege*. The chapter has also pointed out the subjective side of theorizing in German to explain Clausewitz's more moderate scope of theoretical recognitions in terms of war. A *Grundsatz* was only intended as a circumstantial lodestar for practical judgement to consider, not as an eternal principle always valid to everyone.

## 4. DER UNTERGANG

### PATRIOTISM AS POLITIK

Thus when the Prussian Army cannot tie itself to the state without going down with it, when the downfall [*der Untergang* cf. progress and rebirth] of the state is inevitable, then I think one can put the army above the state, and assume it would be wiser to entrust the monarch with the right to the former instead of tying it to the latter.<sup>330</sup>

The chapter takes Clausewitz to imprisonment in France for about eight months. It addresses his doubts and reflections about the German way of thinking, which he identified as political weakness. *Politik* as patriotism was raised at a time of despair as the natural way forward, a political view that infused the reform of Prussia between 1807 and 1812. The passage quoted above has been used to project Clausewitz as a one-sided militarist putting the army before society. This is misleading; on the contrary it displays the tight knitting of the political and military performance in his ideas; in this sense more a continuation of Machiavelli than a precursor of Ludendorff. Further, the chapter elaborates aspects of the German way of thinking in terms of Romantic hermeneutics, important for understanding Clausewitz. The chapter ends with a brief analysis of his military thought concerning the development and teaching of the *Kriegskunst* in the midst of reform.

#### THE GERMAN WAY OF THINKING

Clausewitz and Prince August left Prussia for captivity in late December 1806. They arrived in Nancy on 17 January, but in the following month were transferred to Soissons. The regimen was apparently easy. Clausewitz wrote about his feelings and impressions to Marie in many frank letters.<sup>331</sup> He even managed to write a short piece

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<sup>330</sup> Clausewitz [November 1807-March 1808], 'Ueber die künftigen Kriegs-Operationen Preußens gegen Frankreich', *Schriften* (1966), 66-90, cf. 89. 'Wenn also die Preußische Armee sich nicht an den Staat fesseln kann ohne mit ihm unterzugehen, wenn der Untergang den Staates unvermeidlich ist, so dünkt es mich kann man die Armee dem Staate gegenüberstellen, und behaupten daß es weiser sey der ersteren die Rechte des Monarchen anzuvertrauen als sie an den letztern zu binden.'

<sup>331</sup> Clausewitz's letters to Marie, January to August 1807, 'Meine Reisejournal', *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 76-131; also printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1/2, 234-301

entitled *Sketch to a Plan of Operations*, which was a strategic reflection of what to do if Austria joined the war. His main military idea was to limit the operational space for French forces. He noted and probably hoped for modest peace terms, which had characterized Bonaparte's conclusions so far.<sup>332</sup>

The king had escaped to Königsberg after the defeat at Jena. The remaining army was squeezed into Silesia but was able to offer increased resistance. Scharnhorst proved himself in the bloody winter battle of Preußisch Eylau on 7-8 February 1807 and was awarded the Pour le Mérite. The army recognized the Hanoverian from this time as an able commander and loyal to the king. A first meeting to settle peace terms took place in late June 1807, without Prussia however.

Prussia was victimised in the Treaty of Tilsit and symbolically not allowed to sign it until 9 July, two days after Russia. Bonaparte and Tsar Alexander had divided Europe into a western and an eastern sphere of interest. Harsh and humiliating peace terms were dictated to the King of Prussia. Briefly, the army was limited to 42,000 soldiers. Huge war reparations had to be paid, several provinces had to be given away and considerable political concessions had to be accepted. Prussia was dwarfed in political, economic and military terms. Diplomats observed already at Tilsit that the harsh terms would lead to future hostilities.<sup>333</sup> A desperate letter to Marie expressed Clausewitz's feelings after Tilsit when he realized the vision of modest peace terms was gone forever:

There are our peace terms! I have been a child! Could I expect anything else? No! And now I am like a despairing being, losing everything for ever in one moment! So different is the reality from the pure idea, from the appearance of the thing to the inner... We are so much in the hands of our enemy.<sup>334</sup>

This passionate statement illuminates the disconnection of visions and realities in a more direct way, further explaining, partly at least, his later struggle to exclude wishful thinking from military theory. A strong victor was free to make the most of a situation only restricted by his mercy. Clausewitz and Prince August started their repatriation in the first days of August 1807, about three weeks after Tilsit, but had to stop in Switzerland to await new passports. They spent two months in Coppet as guests of the French-Swiss authoress and political activist Madame Germaine de Staël (1766-1817).

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<sup>332</sup> Clausewitz [Spring 1807], 'Skizze zu einem Operationsplane für Öesterreich, wenn es jetzt theil an dem Kriege gegen Frankreich nehmen wollte', printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1/2, 67-72

<sup>333</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 585-90

<sup>334</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Soissons 31 July 1807, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 130-31. 'Da sind die Friedensbedinungen für uns! Welch ein Kind ich bin! Konnte ich etwas anderes erwarten? Habe ich etwas anderes erwartet? Nein! Und doch bin ich wie ein Verzweifelder, der alles in einem Momente und auf ewig verlor! So verschieden ist die Wirklichkeit von der bloßen Vorstellung, die äußere Erscheinung der Dinge von der inneren... Wir sind so sehr in den Händen unseres Gegners.'

She was known for her great interest in German literature and her steadfast opposition to Bonaparte. Her texts, inspired by Rousseau and Montesquieu, mixed enthusiasm and rationalism. She depicted notably the German people as '*Dichter und Denker*'. Here Clausewitz met August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845), one of the fathers of German Romanticism, who introduced him to the poetry of the German Middle Ages. Marie was told that Schlegel was a man easy to love because he personified a good German patriot filled with a rock-solid hatred of the French.<sup>335</sup>

The Swiss pedagogue and educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) lived in the vicinity of Coppet. Clausewitz visited his institute and observed that his didactic method cultivated imagination very well. The pupils' studies were directed as little as possible, so as to make the learning effort as small as possible. Pestalozzi's approach, entrusting to the individual student to take responsibility and learn on his own, from his interest and insights, well reflected the ideals of *Bildung*. Clausewitz's later view of military theory as an instrument of self-education to prepare for command followed this view as well.<sup>336</sup> Prince August and his adjutant arrived finally in a still-occupied Berlin in November 1807.

At home Clausewitz wrote a reflection on the cultural differences between the French and the German people in a text entitled *Die Deutschen und die Franzosen*.<sup>337</sup> He asked whether the present state of French preponderance and German subjugation was a matter caused by circumstances or by different conventions and a different way of thinking. The theme was not new; it seems to have been in his mind since leaving Soissons in August, according to his travel notebook.<sup>338</sup> He had also discussed linguistic differences between French and German with Madame de Staël to understand their implications at national conventions and institutions. The cultural dimensions of thinking and speaking were also rhapsodically addressed in his notebook and in some letters.<sup>339</sup>

From this philosophical tendency derives the indescribable spirit of reasoning by the Germans, and that is to say not within the limited borders of French reasoning, so the Governments can circumvent them, instead moreover to the very far borders of thinking. The deeper reason goes, the more must he fear one-sidedness, not just as one of many dangers, which one is exposed to along the way. And this one-sidedness,

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<sup>335</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Coppet 15 September 1807, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 136-8. See also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 131

<sup>336</sup> Clausewitz [August-September 1807, incomplete manuscript], 'Pestalozzi', printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 110-13. Also printed in Heinz Stubig, *Pädagogik und Politik in der preußischen Reformzeit* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1982), 50-52

<sup>337</sup> Clausewitz [November-December 1807], 'Die Deutschen und die Fransosen', printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 73-88; also printed in *Schriften* (1922), 35-50

<sup>338</sup> Clausewitz [August 1807], 'Journal einer Reise von Soissons über Dijon nach Genf', printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 88- 110.

<sup>339</sup> Clausewitz [during 1807], 'Bemerkungen und Einfälle', excerpt from a notebook of 47 pages (today lost?) printed in Rothfels, *Krieg und Politik*, 221-29; Clausewitz [1807], Note on social conditions science and politics, *Schriften* (1922), 51-64



the enemy of all political and practical directions in general, indeed depicts the German spirit of enquiry. Hence the many systems, which twist themselves into narrow circles and seek to put truth inside their borders. This holds true not only for the lofty savants and the philosophers, but also for the great majority of people who talk of the more important matters of human thinking...<sup>340</sup>

The German inclination to research and philosophise permitted one-sided thought systems of little practical utility. In short, he found French thinking more limited but in fact mostly closer to reality. The French national character made the French people a more effective political instrument, which was manifested in their moral supremacy on the battlefield. It is a bit of irony the Clausewitz was later judged by a French interpreter as: 'The most German of Germans...In reading him one constantly has the feeling of being in a metaphysical fog.'<sup>341</sup>

However, an apparent feature of Clausewitz's future thinking was to overcome one-sidedness in strategic thought, to embrace and cultivate understanding of the dynamics in political and military action. In the dark hour he renewed his confidence in Machiavelli's way of pragmatic thinking: 'No book in the world is more necessary for politicians than Machiavelli; those who affectedly express disgust for his practical principles like a kind of humanistic *Petit-maître* [small master].'<sup>342</sup> In addition, he observed the interpretation of Machiavelli by the young Friedrich the Great from around 1740, entitled *Antimachiavel*.<sup>343</sup> Clausewitz regarded the piece as a work of intellectual training. The king expressed himself as a young academic, happy to employ the tone of a docent for the first time. Friedrich had however followed Machiavelli in his foreign policy, which he had not been able to completely hide in the *Antimachiavel*, according to Clausewitz's interpretation.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Clausewitz [November-December 1807], 'Die Deutschen und die Fransosen', Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, 73-88, cf. 81-82. 'Von dieser philosophischen Tendenz rührt der unbeschreibliche Geist des Resonnements bei der Deutschen her, und zwar nicht in engen Gränzen wie bei den franzosen, so daß die Regierungen ihn umgehen könnten, sondern gleich hinaus bis die entferntesten Gränzen des Denkes. Je tiefer der Verstand steigt, desto mehr muß er die Einseitigkeit fürchten, nicht als eine der Gefahren, welchen man auf dem Wege zu ihr ausgesetzt ist. Und diese Einseitigkeit, die feindinn aller politischen und überhaupt praktischen Einrichtungen zeichnet wirklich den deutschen Untersuchungsgeist aus. Daher die Menge von Systemen, die sich in engern kreisen drehen und der Wahrheit ihre Gränze stecken wollen. Dies ist nicht bloß wahr von den vornehmen Gelehrten und den Philosophen, sondern von dem großen haufen Alle, die über die wichtigeren Gegenstände des menschlichen Denkens sprechen...' (my emphasize)

<sup>341</sup> Hubert Camon, *Clausewitz* (Paris, 1911) cited in Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 228

<sup>342</sup> Clausewitz [1807], 'Note', *Schriften* (1922), 63. 'Kein Buch in der Welt ist dem Politiker notwendiger, als der Machiavel; die welche einen Abscheu vor Seinen Grundsätzen affektieren, sind eine Art humanistischer Petits-maîtres.'

<sup>343</sup> Friedrich the Great, 'Anti-Machivell oder ein Versuch einer Critik über Machiavells Regierungskunst eines Fürsten.' printed in Machiavelli, *Regierungskunst eines Fürsten* (1756), 213-397

<sup>344</sup> Clausewitz [1807], 'Note', *Schriften* (1922), 63-64

At the time Fichte stepped forward and lectured patriotically at Berlin University. His *Reden an die deutsche Nation* was published in the winter of 1807-1808, which included a more sympathetic analysis of Machiavelli.<sup>345</sup> Fichte's speeches argued for German political rebirth and reformation based on spiritual freedom and inner independence. 'The struggle with arms is concluded, the fact is we want a new fight about *Grundsätze*, the traditions of character.'<sup>346</sup> Fichte's ideas became the inspiration and philosophical foundation of the subsequent reform and rise of German nationalism. Clausewitz read the piece on Machiavelli and responded to Fichte anonymously in January 1809. The letter pointed to his pet problem: the difficulty for military and political thinking to grasp realities and transform them into viable courses of action.<sup>347</sup>

Romantic thought struggled with the problem of harmonizing knowing and believing. A short note in 1808 blamed German philosophers for Prussia's failure to see the world right. To trust the goodwill of a *Weltregierung*, i.e. Kant's idea of a world government in *Zum Ewigen Frieden*, instead of preparing steadfast resistance: 'Conceited, contemptible – despicable philosophy, that wants to place us in a position, high above the current of the times, so we can remove its pressure and put an end to all our bosoms' inner reluctance! Those who put blind faith in the idea of a *Weltregierung* of their high purposes and reason over-subtly like observers of God's works instead of the consuming blood, they are the tools of this philosophy!'<sup>348</sup>

The concurrent note *Politisches Rechnen* addressed the elusiveness of truth in political-moral matters. It was mostly a matter of personal preference and action was ruled by probability; but at the same time it was possible to estimate quite well.<sup>349</sup> The standpoint illustrates an important aspect of Clausewitz's future ideas. A theory to support strategic thinking cannot nest in one-sided beliefs that may lose contact with political and military realities.

It is apparent the practical linkage of *Staatskunst* and *Kriegskunst* was troublesome in Prussia at the time. Clausewitz's former classmate Rühle von Lilienstern (1780-1847)

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<sup>345</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Ueber Machiavelli, als Schriftsteller und Stellen aus Seinen Schriften', *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1808), 4-14. First published in the Periodical *Westa* 1807.

<sup>346</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Rede an die Deutsche Nation* (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1808), 429. 'Der Kampf mit den Waffen ist beschlossen; es erhebt sich, so wir es wollen der neue Kampf der Grundsätze, der Sitten des Charakters.'

<sup>347</sup> Anonymus [Clausewitz] to Fichte 11 January 1809, 'An den Herrn Verfasser des Aufsatzes über Machiavelli in 1sten Bande der Westa', Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1979), 159-166. First published in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Leben und litterarischer Briefwechsel*, Zweiter Band (Sulzbach: Seidelschen Buchhandlung, 1831), 467-474

<sup>348</sup> Clausewitz [1808], 'Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen', *Schriften* (1922), 65. 'Eingebildete, verachtungs-spottenswürdige Philosophie, die uns auf einem Standpunkt stellen will, hoch über das Treiben der Gegenwart hinaus, damit wir uns ihrem Drück entziehen und alles innere Widerstreben unseres Busens aufhöre! Die ein totes Vertrauen in die Weltregierung ihre höheren Zwecke an die Stelle setzt und eine kalte Klügelei als Zuschauerin der Werke Gottes an die Stelle der verzehrenden Blut, die Sein Werkzeug ist!'

<sup>349</sup> Clausewitz [1807-08], 'Note Politsches Rechnen', *Schriften* (1922), 66-67

started at this time a journal intending to investigate the intimate linkage between the art of war and statecraft. Entitled *Pallas, Eine Zeitschrift für Staats- und Kriegskunst*, it appeared in print in 1808-1809. Lillienstern managed to gather military and civilian scholars to write about the close relation of statecraft and the art of war.<sup>350</sup>

Clausewitz's military-theoretical peer Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869) published his new theory of war in the first edition of *Pallas* (1808).<sup>351</sup> The Swiss Jomini had met Napoleon in Mainz just before Jena in 1806 and had according to himself impressed the Emperor by forecasting the French line of operation. Jomini noted that Bonaparte responded to his outline of the principles of war: 'I am delighted, that the first book which shows the true principles of war belongs to my time of governance. They did not teach us suchlike at our military schools.'<sup>352</sup>

Jomini served Napoleon in the staff of Marshal Ney until 1813, when he switched sides and took service in the Russian Army, as Clausewitz did in 1812. He published *Traité des grandes opérations militaires* (1807-1809) which, appearing in German in 1812, outlined a theory of grand operations by a comparison of Friedrich's and Bonaparte's conduct of war.<sup>353</sup> Clausewitz in his notebook in 1808 refuted abstract precepts of strategy such as Venturini's and Bülow's.

The more I think about this part [strategy] of the *Kriegskunst*, the more I am convinced, that theory *per se* can establish but few or even no abstract *Grundsätze* [precepts]; however not, as the usual view, because the matter is so complicated, but because one would succumb to triviality. In war there occur so many small circumstances that together determine action that, should one embrace all of them by abstract propositions, one would appear as the greatest pedant and become disgustingly trivial.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> On Lillienstern see 'General-Leutnant Rühle von Lillienstern – Ein biographisches Denkmal' beiheft zum *Militair Wochenblatt* (Berlin: Mittler, October-December 1847); Hagemann, *Die Deutsche Lehre vom Kriege*, 44-66

<sup>351</sup> See for example Jomini, 'L'art de la Guerre', *Pallas Eine Zeitschrift für Staats und Kriegskunst*, Hg. R.v.L, Erster Bd. (Tübingen: Cotta, 1808), 31-40

<sup>352</sup> Napoleon according to Jomini cited in Jean-Jacques Langendorf, *Krieg führen: Antoine-Henri Jomini* (Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag AG, 2008), 20-21; see also on Jomini: Michael Howard, 'Jomini and the Classical Tradition in Military Thought', *Studies in War and Peace* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 21-36; Gat, *A history in Military Thought*, 108-37

<sup>353</sup> Colonel Jomini, *Traité des grandes opérations militaires*, 5.Vols (Paris: Giguët et Michaud, 1807-09); Ibid, *Kritische und militärische Geschichte der Feldzüge Friedrichs des Zweiteiten, verglichen mit denen des Kaisers Napoleon und dem neuen Systeme* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1811)

<sup>354</sup> Clausewitz [1808], 'Strategie – 29. Über abstrakte Grundsätze der Strategie', *Schriften* (1979), 46-49, cf. 46. 'Je mehr ich über diesen Teil der Kriegskunst sinne, um so überzeugter werde ich, daß die Theorie desselben wenig oder gar keine abstrakten Sätzen aufstellen kann; aber nicht, wie die gewöhnliche Meinung ist, deswegen, weil die Sache zu schwierig sei, sondern weil man der Trivialität erliegen würde. Im Kriege kommen so viel kleinliche Umstände vor, welche das handeln mit bestimmen, daß wenn man alle diese durch die abstrakten Sätze gehörig mit umfassen wollte, man als der größte Pedant erscheinen und bis zum Ekel trivial werden würde.'

Gat pointed oddly to this notebook to prove Clausewitz's lifelong theoretical quest for a universal theory of war.<sup>355</sup> On the contrary, it is obvious the young Clausewitz had a rather sceptical view of the possibility to distil an apt theory to guide the conduct of war. The present work suggests we should interpret Clausewitz more as a concerned patriotic pragmatist than as a general theorist with no immediate practical purpose.

Clausewitz observed that Jomini had recently attempted to establish a theory of war as general principles, which probably referred to the piece in *Pallas*. He judged Jomini far more solid than the others, but the suggested theory presumed impersonal perfection like most other theorists'. Clausewitz objected to this assumption of perfection as a theoretical norm; that every military event was planned and unfolded accordingly. This way of theorising did not reflect reality. His salient objection can be compared to his later coining of the atmosphere of war and friction as indispensable parts of practical and realistic theory.

The view of combat and victory as open concepts, thus as events of uncertain unfolding and larger impact, was elaborated as a contrast to various deterministic systems of strategy. As opposed to Jomini's impersonal and abstract system, presuming military perfection, Clausewitz considered Friedrich's strategic thinking as simple and natural pragmatism:

Friedrich II had seen in the battles of Kolin, Hochkirch and Kunersdorf how uncertain victory is; the battles at Prague, Zorndorff and Torgau had shown him how insignificant and coincidental the success of a bloody victory can still be; and that not all battles are like Leuthen and Roßbach. He had seen how little fitted the clumsy but cautious Daun was to play the game of genius with him – all this frightened him from drawing bold outlines with his tiny, yearly more weakened aids [forces], and the sluggishness of his enemies reinforced him in this negative tendency. He was like all great generals very little dependent on a predetermined system and thought [pragmatically] only to take the shortest way to his aims. Therefore he intended to preserve his calm for as long as possible and not do decisive battles before utmost need drove him to do so.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> See Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 193

<sup>356</sup> Clausewitz [1808], 'Strategie – 29. Über abstrakte Grundsätze der Strategie', *Schriften* (1979), 46-49, cf. 48-49. 'Friedrich II. hatte in den Schlachten bei Kolin, Hochkirch und Kunersdorf gesehen, wie ungewiß der Sieg ist, die Schlachten bei Prag, Zorndorff und Torgau hatten ihm gezeigt, wie geringfügig, wie zufällig der Erfolg eines blutigen Sieges noch sein kann, und daß nicht alle Schlachten sind wie die bei Leuthen und bei Roßbach; er hatte gesehen wie wenig der Schwerfällige, aber vorsichtige Daun geeignet war, um ein genialisches Spiel mit ihm zu treiben – alles das schreckte ihn bei seinen geringen in jedem Jahr mehr geschwächten Hilfsmitteln ab von kühnen Entwürfen, und die Schläfigkeit seiner Feinde bestärkte ihn in dieser negativen Tendenz. Er hing wie alle großen Generale sehr wenig an ein bestimmtes System und gedachte nur den nächsten Weg zum Ziele zu gehen. Darum glaubte er sich selbst so lange als möglich ruhig verhalten und nicht eher entscheidende Schläge tun zu müssen, bis ihn die äußerste Not dazu treiben würde.'

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), preacher and professor of theology, has been referred to as the inventor of modern hermeneutics as well as the father of modern protestant theology.<sup>357</sup> He emphasized *Anschauung und Gefühl*, intuition-idea-concept and feeling, in the proper understanding of religion. Schleiermacher translated Plato and was the primary patriotic apostle of the Prussian reform and Clausewitz's favourite preacher.<sup>358</sup> Schleiermacher followed the Romantic refutation of Kant's dichotomy of the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon as the thing appeared to the mind. This way of Romantic thought, also referred to as German philosophical idealism, with other exponents such as Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel, was a movement with a clear political undertone.<sup>359</sup> They argued that the object and the mental representation were not different. For Schleiermacher, the ideal and the real were simply united in God. His hermeneutical approach connected language and thinking very closely; speaking was the outer form of thinking, in a method that articulated two sides of interpretation as inner and outer aspects.<sup>360</sup> The outward criterion was grammatical in the structure of language: the inner criterion addressed psychological and technical aspects of the author.

These two sides helped Schleiermacher to interpret an author's intention, which was the key to understanding the true meaning of a text: 'every act of understanding is the inverse of an act of speech, in that the thought underlying the speech must enter consciousness.' Another important feature of Schleiermacher's approach was that he made the primacy of misunderstanding universal, because it could never be completely dismissed. He further articulated understanding as an act of reconstruction. The subject matter of the text *per se* was in that sense not the primary interest for Schleiermacher but the reconstructed viewpoint of the author.

The task for the interpreter had as mentioned above the infinite goal to 'understand the discourse first as well as and then better than the author.'<sup>361</sup> Schleiermacher's hermeneutics sought the author's thought underlying a text or a statement. The psychological side of interpretation seemed more important to the older Schleiermacher. Clausewitz was similarly interested in the strategic thoughts of the Great Captains in particular situations to help him understand strategy properly. This did not yet apply to any great system or universal theory; it was more about understanding the actual pragmatism of different situations. Schleiermacher restricted his interpretative approach to the text and the author. In the same way Clausewitz interpreted the strategic thought of commanders as related to particular historical events.

The Greek canon was interpreted in a manner similar to Schleiermacher's interpretation of religious thought. In 1808 the philologist Friedrich Ast (1778-1848)

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<sup>357</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik mit besonderer Beziehung auf das Neue Testament*, Hg. Friedrich Lücke (Berlin: Reimer, 1838)

<sup>358</sup> Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 4/5, 413

<sup>359</sup> See Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860 The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

<sup>360</sup> Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 9-12

<sup>361</sup> Schleiermacher here cited in Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 68-71

propounded a method to understand the literature of antiquity that reflected the later 'hermeneutic circle': 'The fundamental law of all understanding and recognizing knowledge [insights] is to detect the *Geist* of the whole from the individual, and through the whole understand the individual; that is the analytical, this the synthetic, method of recognizing knowledge [*Erkenntnis*].'<sup>362</sup>

Ast argued that one had to understand the individual avatars in the spirit of antiquity and vice-versa to understand the whole of Antiquity from the individual works: the spirit of an author had to be understood in terms of Antiquity. Ast's outline resembled fairly well the later opening passage of the revisited *Grundvorstellung*, printed as the first chapter of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>363</sup> At this point, 1827, *Politik* in a broader sense was theorized as the whole for individual strategic thought, the outward criterion against which to understand strategic thought. Clausewitz was a forerunner of modern hermeneutics, which was to prosper as a general historical method in the decades to come.

Clausewitz's letter to Fichte in January 1809 elaborated the inner and outer aspects of the *Kriegskunst* as a criticism of the impersonal systems of strategy. The current Prussian military inferiority was explained by the professional obsession with the outer artistic *forms* such as patterns of movement and position. At this point *Geist* was committed fighting, the inner neglected side of the Prussian construction of war.

The individual responsibility pinpointed by Fichte was militarily interpreted by Clausewitz. The time of reform and the identified problems it tried to address appear clearly in the letter. Moreover, Clausewitz faintly continued the historical interpretation outlined in the study of Gustavus Adolphus's campaigns that important military views and ideas had disappeared during the Enlightenment. He indicated, more or less, that Prussian military thought had lost sight of first principles. This historical interpretation would be recalled and developed after Waterloo as a foundation for *Vom Kriege*.

To return from such degeneration of the *Kriegskunst* into a lowly handicraft, which, as already observed, did not just take place during the Middle Ages, but rather rose to even higher levels in some periods of more recent centuries, one should not, I think, hold fast to an earlier, better manner like Machiavelli did and feed on this or that form, but seek only to restore the true *Geist* of war. Thus one should not start with the form [outer criteria in the form of abstract systems] but with the *Geiste* [inner core of fighting spirit and commitment], and confidently expect that this will itself destroy the old forms and will continue to have an appropriate effect [cf. Scharnhorst's mediation of old and new].

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<sup>362</sup> Friedrich Ast, *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Landshut: Thomann, 1808), 178. See also Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 65. 'Das Grundgesetz alles Verstehens und Erkenntnis ist, aus dem Einzelnen den Geist des Ganzen zu finden, und durch das Ganze das Einzelne zu begreifen; jenes die analytische, diese die synthetische Methode der Erkenntnis.'

<sup>363</sup> Clausewitz [second part of 1827], 'Was ist der Krieg?', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191

This true *Geist* of war appears to me to operate through taking advantage of the power of every single person in an army as far as possible and infusing a warlike mind-set in him, so *das Kriegsfeuer* [the fire of war] glows through all elements of the army and there are no dead coals in the large mass. This appears (much depends on the *Kriegskunst*) in the way one treats individuals, even more however how one uses them [cf. the reform]. Far from the tendency of the modern *Kriegskunst* to use people as mere machines it must, as must all others in as far as the nature of its weapons permits, enliven individual powers. This has of course its limitations, since one essential condition where large masses are involved in the struggle is that they can be led by one sensible will without too much friction.

Yet one should stop here and not, as was once the tendency in the eighteenth century, try to form the whole into an artistic machine where the moral forces are subordinated to the mechanical, which expresses its effect through its mere furnishings, which is expected to conquer the enemy through mere forms; the fact that one can achieve infinitely more through enlivening individual forces than through artistic forms is shown by the history of almost all civil wars and particularly the Swiss War of Independence and the French Revolutionary War.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Clausewitz to Fichte, 11 January 1809, *Schriften* (1979), 161-62. (my emphasis) 'Um von einer solchen Ausartung der Kriegskunst in kleinliches Handwerkswesen, die , wie schon bemerkt, keineswegs bloß im Mittelalter stattgefunden hat, vielmehr in mancher Periode der spätern Jahrhunderte noch viel höher gestiegen ist, zurückzukehren, glaube ich, soll man nicht wie Machiavelli an eine schon dagewesene bessere Manier sich halten und sich diesen oder jenen Formen wieder nähren, sondern einzig suchen, den wahren Geist Krieges wiederherzustellen. Man soll nicht also nicht mit der Form, sondern mit dem Geiste anfangen und sicher erwarten, daß dieser die alten Formen selbst zerstören und in angemessenen wirken werde. Dieser wahre Geist des Krieges scheint mir darin zu bestehen, dass man die Kräfte eines jeden Einzelnen im Heere so viel als möglich in Anspruch nimmt und ihm eine kriegerische Gesinnung einflößt, damit so das Kriegsfeuer alle Elemente des Heeres durchglühe und es nicht in der großen Masse eine Menge todter Kohlen gebe. Dies geschieht (so viel in der Kriegskunst liegt) durch die Art, wie man den Einzelnen behandelt, noch mehr aber, aber wie man ihn gebraucht, Weit entfernt also, daß die Kriegskunst der Neuern die Tendenz haben sollte, die Menschen als bloße Maschinen zu gebrauchen, muß sie, so gut als jede andere, so weit es ihr die Natur ihrer Waffen erlaubt, die individuellen Kräfte beleben. Dies hat freilich seine Grenzen, denn eine unerläßliche Bedingung bei großen Streitmassen ist eine solche Einrichtung, dass sie ohne zu große Reibung von einem vernünftigen Willen geleitet werden können...Aber hier sollte man auch stehen bleiben und nicht, wie dies zumal im 18ten Jahrhundert die Tendenz gewesen ist, das Ganze zu einer künstlichen Maschine bilden wollen, worin die moralischen Kräfte den mechanischen untergeordnet werden, die ihre Wirkung durch die bloße Einrichtung äußern, die den Feind durch bloße Formen besiegen soll, und in der dem Einzelnen die möglichst kleinste Aufgabe zum Gebrauch seiner intellektuellen Kräfte gegeben ist. Daß man durch Belebung der individuellen Kräfte unendlich mehr gewinnt als durch künstliche Formen, zeigt die Geschichte fast aller bürgerlichen Kriege und vorzüglich der Unabhängigkeitskrieg der Schweizer und der französische Revolutionskrieg.'

## PATRIOTISM AND REFORM

The king decided two weeks after Tilsit to start a Commission of Military Reorganisation.<sup>365</sup> It was organized outside the ordinary administrative structure and responsible directly to the king. The Commission was chaired by Scharnhorst, who was promoted to Major-general. It was tasked to evaluate the army's performance and propose military improvements for the future. The group soon became divided into a conservative faction and a more progressive one. The chairman finally demanded a replacement of members to overcome the opposition to substantial military reforms, which the king reluctantly accepted.

The Commission was thus joined by people Scharnhorst trusted from *Militärisches Gesellschaft*: Friedrich Graf v. Götzen (1767-1820) and Hermann v. Boyen (1771-1848). In the commission were also Gneisenau and Karl v. Grolmann (1777-1843) who had fought with great distinction. The latter was one of the few native Prussians in the inner core of reformers. The king finally accepted the radical proposals for military change outlined during the autumn of 1807. The two leading political characters of the Prussian reform were Karl *Freiherr* von Stein (1757-1831) and Karl August *Freiherr* von Hardenberg (1770-1822), both subjects of Napoleon's suspicion. Clausewitz got acquainted with both of them, but the former, more controversial, was closer to him and they developed a personal relation.

Hardenberg analysed the political mismatch in the *Rigaer Denkschrift* from September 1807. This memorandum became one of the principle documents of the reform. The French Revolution had evoked the powers sleeping in the nation, from which the subsequent wars had emanated. Napoleon had utilized these powers and Prussia had to prepare for future fighting. Neutrality was for the strong and thus not a viable course of action any more. Hardenberg suggested a benign revolution directed by the government to modernise the state. Democratic principles in a monarchy were the most suitable constitution for the moment. The people had to be involved in the administration and defence of the state. The reform of Prussia had three major interrelated components – the military, the political and the educational. Normal political parties and institutions did not work properly, so much political work was done informally in a small group and not according to normal legislative proposals.<sup>366</sup>

The government and the reformers were at this time in Memel on the coast of Eastern Prussia, near Russia, to escape French influence. Scharnhorst wrote in late November 1807 to Clausewitz about their intentions. The tone was warm despite long absence and many difficulties. He stressed the need for a national rebirth by destroying the forms of the old state, instead giving the people a feeling of national independence and making them know their country. Scharnhorst here introduced Gneisenau to Clausewitz as a man without *Vorurteil*, prejudice, a characteristic frequently

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<sup>365</sup> See for example Peter Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform 1807-1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 117-40

<sup>366</sup> See for example Friedrich Meinecke, *The Age of German Liberation 1795-1815*, Edited with an introduction by Peter Paret (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976)



appreciated and spoken of among the reformers.<sup>367</sup> Gneisenau had commanded the defence of Kolberg from the end of April 1807 until peace was signed, an effort that made him widely known.<sup>368</sup>

Gneisenau formulated in a nutshell the foundation for people's war in 1807, which would be a guiding idea for military reform: 'People must become enthusiastic for an idea, if it is to lead to anything spectacular.'<sup>369</sup> He wrote likewise that modern high military command can no longer be about having an old name and a title; the entire nation had to be used for defence. A military genius could be asleep among the citizens, a person who had the energy and power to command successfully.<sup>370</sup> These ideas were reflected in Clausewitz's letter to Fichte, previously cited.

Clausewitz learned that the general staff was to be restored under another name and the reformers counted on him as a member.<sup>371</sup> The king and the reformers moved in the middle of January 1808 to Königsberg. Meanwhile in Berlin, Clausewitz outlined a strategic study on future operations against France, which inspired later plans for a Prussian uprising.<sup>372</sup> He was seemingly influenced by Gustavus Adolphus's strategy of using the whole of Germany as a war theatre for offensive operations with limited means. He wanted to avoid being tied down by too many defensive positions, which would consume the tiny forces available for conducting mobile war.

The relation of the army and the state was elaborated. Should the king have to escape towards Russia without an army left to back his power, he would lose his political being and turn into a private person. The army could be of value to the Russians and consequently keep their interest in safeguarding Prussia. Clausewitz stressed the relation of fighting power and political being even further than Machiavelli, as the opening quote to this chapter indicates.<sup>373</sup> The key to future independence was to remain a political being, which presupposed fighting power. It consequently made no strategic sense at a moment when the state was threatened by ruin and annihilation

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<sup>367</sup> Scharnhorst to Clausewitz, Memel 27 November 1807, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 4/6, 718-21; Scharnhorst to Clausewitz, Memel 1 December 1807, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 4/6, 729-30.

<sup>368</sup> See Gerhard Thiele, *Gneisenau Leben und Werk des Königlich-Preußischen Generalfeldmarschalls. Eine Chronik*, (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, zweite Auflage 2007), 50-58

<sup>369</sup> *Gneisenau Eine Auswahl aus seinen Briefen und Denkschriften*, Ed. Wilhelm Capelle (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911), 1. 'Der Mensch muß für eine Idee begeistert werden, wenn er etwas Großes leisten soll.'

<sup>370</sup> Gneisenau, note written between August 1807 and 16 January 1808, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 1/5, 301-02

<sup>371</sup> Scharnhorst to Clausewitz, Memel 17 December 1807, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 4/6, 732-33

<sup>372</sup> Clausewitz [November 1807 - March 1808], 'Ueber die künftigen Kriegs-Operationen Preußens gegen Frankreich', *Schriften* (1966), 66-90. See Hahlweg's n. 1 on the influence of Clausewitz's text.

<sup>373</sup> Clausewitz [November 1807- March 1808], 'Ueber die künftigen Kriegs-Operationen Preußens gegen Frankreich', *Schriften* (1966), 66-90, cf. 89.

from vastly superior forces to tie the few forces able to fight a defensive war for freedom to the territory *per se*.

Prince August and his adjutant left Berlin and joined the reformers in Königsberg on 1 April 1808. Clausewitz got so many impressions that he found them difficult to comprehend in his first meetings with the reformers. He had spoken a few words with the king, who had been most polite but nothing more. He felt a lack of nuances and found his career determined by pure routine in the present absolute system. At the same time Bonaparte replaced the Spanish king with his own relative, a danger clear and present to Friedrich Wilhelm as well. Clausewitz had to keep a low profile as adjutant to the prince, so it was not possible for Scharnhorst to involve him formally in the reform work yet.<sup>374</sup> Clausewitz did however join the reformers in social life with great joy and observed that Scharnhorst was at his best, full of energy and as never before in the thick of things.<sup>375</sup>

At this point Clausewitz first read Fichte's speeches, which Marie was told about in a very appreciative tone.<sup>376</sup> In response she told him she had read Schiller's *Wallenstein* once more and found great joy in the pure German feeling and sensitivity expressed in the work, something they both appreciated.<sup>377</sup> In late April Prince August inspected the nearby battlefields of Eylau and Friedland, accompanied by his adjutant and Scharnhorst.<sup>378</sup> Clausewitz returned to Berlin at the end of April, happy to have been introduced to the reformers and the great reform that was going on. But the public situation was terrible in the aftermath of defeat and occupation. This caused Scharnhorst in the spring of 1808 to prepare a letter to Napoleon, seemingly never sent.<sup>379</sup>

The public situation made plans for an uprising more urgent. In addition, Bonaparte finally put a figure to the demand for war reparations in the Treaty of Paris of 8 September 1808. Prussia was required to pay 120 million francs, more than 32 million *Reichthaler*; an enormous sum for a population of less than five million. Scharnhorst drafted plans for an uprising, but the driving power seems to have been Gneisenau's.

The three shared the same intense feeling for German resistance, which seems to have brought their friendship closer. Gneisenau outlined a plan for a public uprising dated 24 August 1808.<sup>380</sup> Clausewitz responded to the outline already the following day, by posing the question of how incomplete the proposed measures appeared when one tried to follow two ways at the same time. He argued in the sense of Machiavelli that it

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<sup>374</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg April 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 151-2

<sup>375</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 10 April 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 153-4

<sup>376</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 15 April 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 154-5

<sup>377</sup> Marie to Clausewitz, Berlin 16 April 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 155-6

<sup>378</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 23 April 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 157--8

<sup>379</sup> Scharnhorst [not later than 13 May 1808], Entwurf eines Briefes an Napoleon, Scharnhorst, *Private und Dienstliche Schriften*, Vol 5 (2009), 105

<sup>380</sup> See Friedrich Thimme, 'In den Erhebungsplänen der preußischen Patrioten in Sommer 1808. Ungedruckte Denkschriften Gneisenaus und Scharnhorsts', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 89 (1901), 78-109

was wise to become allied to one side and go for one way all out. He ended the letter by saying that he understood Gneisenau's desire to appear as an 'apolitical friend of truth' and not too ambitious by keeping two ways open. However this politeness was refuted: 'I want you, Sir, to appear as an adamant prophet, a scowling son of destiny, that one cannot negotiate the price with.'<sup>381</sup>

The military reform started to be effective under Scharnhorst's direction from the summer of 1808. With freedom and the new citizen soldier in mind Gneisenau had written the article '*Freiheit der Rücken*' in the patriotic paper *Der Volksfreund* of 9 July 1808, suggesting the abolition of institutionalized military punishment.<sup>382</sup> This was related to the new controversial principle of general conscription adopted in August 1808. A military institution constructed to nurture committed fighting by citizens could not rely on punishment as an incentive for action. Clausewitz returned to Königsberg at the same time and was finally transferred to the reformers as Scharnhorst's *literarischen Faktor*, i.e. ghost-writer.<sup>383</sup> As such he wrote two articles on the new *Kriegsartikel* to inform the public about the change in the military constitution to citizen-defence and general conscription.<sup>384</sup>

Four major purposes for the military reform were later expounded by Clausewitz. First, to develop an order of battle and tactical organisation that could match the French; secondly, to make the army morally stronger: this included the abolition of foreign recruitment and physical punishment; a new military education for officers, which Clausewitz took part in 1810-1811. General conscription and arming the people were the most controversial part. This was decided on in 1808 but not fully implemented until 1813. The third purpose was to introduce a new type of exercise that more realistically trained the new way of fighting. Finally, a new way of selecting officers focused on ability instead of age and nobility.<sup>385</sup>

The old military administrative structure closely connected to the old defective system of the absolute state was dissolved. A Ministry of War was founded in December 1808 as one of five ministries in the governmental reorganisation. Scharnhorst became head of the *Allgemeine Kriegsdepartement*, the first and main body responsible for all military matters except military finance.<sup>386</sup> This department was organized in three

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<sup>381</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 25 August 1808, *Schriften* (1979), 129. 'Ich will, daß Sie erscheinen, wie ein unerbittlicher Prophet, ein finsterer Sohn des Fatums, mit dem man nicht dingen und handeln kann um den Preis.'

<sup>382</sup> Lehman, *Scharnhorst* Vol 2/2, 111

<sup>383</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 4 September 1808, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 170-1

<sup>384</sup> 'Kriegswissenschaften I', *Jenaische Allgemeine Litteratur-Zeitung* Nr 238, (11 October 1808), Sp.65-68; 'Kriegswissenschaften II', *Jenaische Allgemeine Litteratur-Zeitung*, Nr 323 (November 1808), Sp.347-50. Both printed in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1979), 133-56

<sup>385</sup> See about the reform Clausewitz [after May 1817], 'Über das Leben und den Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979), 126-38

<sup>386</sup> See Walter Görlitz, *Der Deutsche Generalstab: Geschichte und Gestalt 1657-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Frankfurter Hefte, 1950), 50-51, fig 1

divisions, all headed by people Scharnhorst trusted.<sup>387</sup> The jealous Friedrich Wilhelm refused to appoint a minister of war since he was afraid to lose his authority as supreme commander; meanwhile Scharnhorst fulfilled this political duty. In addition the king removed Stein, known for his anti-Napoleonic posture, from office as a political front figure in November 1808,.

Clausewitz was promoted to *Wirklicher Kapitän* (Real Captain) on 20 February 1809 and handpicked as Scharnhorst's *aide-de-camp* at the Ministry of War. His friends Tiedemann and Karl Graf von Dohna (1784-1859), equally trusted pupils of Scharnhorst, accompanied him. The latter was from one of the first families of Eastern Prussia where Schleiermacher was tutor. He married Scharnhorst's daughter Julie in 1810 and finally became a field marshal. Clausewitz was at this time ill but happy to hear that his oldest brother Friedrich Volmar Clausewitz (1771-1854) had just been promoted to major. He had distinguished himself in the war and was awarded the *Pour le Mérite* in 1807.<sup>388</sup> His second-oldest brother Wilhelm Clausewitz (1773-1849) was at this time company commander in the infantry. Both brothers were later promoted to general, but Clausewitz had apparently not a very close relation with his elder brothers.

Austria decided in secret in early February 1809 to renew the war with France and take vengeance. The time seemed right since the French Army was tied down in the Peninsula War against the joint forces of Spain, Portugal and Britain. The Austrian Army had been reorganized, which included the raising of a huge *Landwehr*, thus conscription and arming the people based on the French idea of *Levée en masse*. This organisation and mass arming inspired the Prussian reformers. Gneisenau proposed to Stein to raise a Prussian Legion in Prague to gather the remains of the Prussian spirit and with honour join Austria in the impending trial of strength.<sup>389</sup> Clausewitz was involved in Gneisenau's plan for a Legion. He wrote at least two related texts on practical matters, first a summary of service conditions proposed to the Austrian government and secondly a directive for promotions.<sup>390</sup>

The Austrians opened the campaign on 9 April 1809 without declaring war and entered Bavaria the following day, a week earlier than Napoleon had expected.<sup>391</sup> The Austrians commanded by Herzog Karl (1771-1847) hoped for a public uprising like that in Spain to force France out of Germany. Prussia did not enter the war but individuals such as Grolman resigned and entered Austrian service. This action was not appreciated by Friedrich Wilhelm and the people around him. For example *Prinzessin*

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<sup>387</sup> 1.Div under Grolman (organisation of officers), 2.Div under Scharnhorst (General staff), 3.Div under Gneisenau (weapons)

<sup>388</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 23 February 1809, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 212-14

<sup>389</sup> Gneisenau to Stein, 15 February 1809, cited by Hahlweg in n. 1, Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1966), 617

<sup>390</sup> Found in G.s Nachlass – Undated and unsigned [February-April], 'Bedingungen, welche dem Oestreichischen KriegsMinisterio vorzuschlagen wären', Ibid., 'BeförderungsModus in der Legion', in *Schriften* (1966), 671-76

<sup>391</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 677-736

Wilhelm criticized Grolman's deeds, in leaving the country to fight abroad, which really annoyed Clausewitz.<sup>392</sup>

Herzog Karl was also a military writer. He had outlined new *Grundsätze* for the higher *Kriegskunst*, i.e. strategy, with his Austrian generals foremost in mind. The opening simply framed war to be fought for an advantageous peace and decisive battle was the means to accomplish large purposes. The *Kriegskunst* was about massing forces at the correct decisive point, thus not so very far apart from Clausewitz's outline of the same topic in 1812.<sup>393</sup>

Clausewitz was responsible for following the situation and briefing the War Department on the unfolding of events. He noted that Herzog Karl was forced to switch from the offensive to the defensive at the beginning of May.<sup>394</sup> Napoleon was however defeated for the first time at Aspern on 21-22 May 1809. To Clausewitz this historical moment was a '*Rettungssiege*', a victory of salvation, about which he wrote a short poem.<sup>395</sup> The joy lasted for two weeks. Napoleon turned the situation around and defeated the Austrian army decisively at Wagram on 5-6 July, which led to a ceasefire agreement and the Treaty of Pressburg on 14 October. Clausewitz was disappointed and ruled out the possibility of joining the Austrian Army already in August.<sup>396</sup> However, he also pinpointed the current strategic need to preserve the slumbering hostility as a glow for a future fire, similar to the standpoints expressed in the letter to Fichte discussed earlier. This illustrated in a way his later conclusion that result in war was never final:

All these germs that have started to develop in this war must be considered in a large perspective, kept in being to make progress. Peace is the blanket of snow under which these germs slumber and make their slow development; war is the blood of summer that will drive them to a rapid full-blown [fight for freedom].<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 23 April 1809, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 222-26

<sup>393</sup> [Herzog Karl], *Grundsätze der höhern Kriegskunst für die Generäle der österreichischen Armee* (Wien: Könl Hof und Staat Drückerei, 1806), 1-2

<sup>394</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 10 May 1809, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 230-32

<sup>395</sup> Clausewitz [May-June 1809], '*Rettung*', *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 239-40. Also printed in Carl von Clausewitz, *Seine Gedichte* (Berlin: Breitschuh & Kock, 2011), 26-27

<sup>396</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Königsberg 21 August 1809, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 258-59

<sup>397</sup> Clausewitz [Summer-Autumn 1809], 'Note without title on the Austrian war 1809', printed in Rothfels, *Krieg und Politik*, 215-18, cf. 217 'Alle diese Keime, die sich in diesem Kriege entwickelt haben, müssen im großen betrachtet, im fortschritten sein und bleiben. Der Friede ist die Schneedecke des Winters, unter welcher sie Schlummern und sich langsam entwickeln; der Krieg ist die Blut des Sommers, die sie Schnell entfaltet und zur Reife treibt.' Also partly in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1922), 73-76

The Prussian government and court moved back to Berlin at the end of October 1809. Clausewitz addressed the temporary situation of peace in a short strategic overview after the Treaty of Pressburg.<sup>398</sup> The new bureaucracy had seemingly not worked properly, since he at some time between Aspern and Wagram analysed deficiencies in the new War Department. The lack of a competent minister of war and the poor relation between the king and the department were expounded.

Clausewitz pointed also to the many private attempts to circumvent the formal structure. He traced the causes of deficiencies to a difference in the view of war. There was a need to understand the unfolding war and adopt proper *Grundsätze*, i.e. precepts according to the situation from a common strategic point of view.<sup>399</sup> Somewhat simplified, *Vom Kriege* was his contribution to establishing this common point of strategic view, which he frequently pinpointed as absent from the highest military-political level for strategic direction in Prussia.

The notes on strategy after the war in the Alps compared Napoleon with Caesar, as did other accounts of the time. Ideas about defence and the crossing of rivers, and mountain warfare related to fighting spirit and uprisings, were also elaborated. Clausewitz continued to think about the relation of tactics and strategy, which would occupy him much more as a military teacher in the next two years.<sup>400</sup> Boyen later described Clausewitz as Scharnhorst's most intimate colleague in the period 1809-1812.<sup>401</sup> He was one of the few fully aware of the secret rearmament plans and was appointed *chef de cabinet* in mid-March 1810. In that position he took minutes and wrote official documents for Scharnhorst.<sup>402</sup> He continued to act as Scharnhorst's assistant until the end of March 1812 when he left Berlin to enter Russian service.

The reforms had many enemies. One was Ludwig von der Marwitz (1777-1837), a true patriot but also a protector of the nobility of old Prussia. He married Marie's younger sister Franziska *Gräfin* Brühl in 1803, who soon died in childbirth. Marie brought up her sister's child for a couple of years, when the father was away. Marwitz raised a *Freikorps* in spring 1807 and later commanded a cavalry brigade in the War of Liberation. Marie continued to have a close relation with Marwitz, despite his and Clausewitz's opposing views in most military and political matters.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Clausewitz [October-December 1809], 'Preußen nach dem Frieden von 1809', *Schriften* (1922), 76-80

<sup>399</sup> Clausewitz, [5 June - 2 July 1809] Untitled and undated document from Gneisenau's Nachlass, 'Über die Ursachen der mangelhaften Geschäftsführung des Allgemeinen Kriegsdepartements', *Schriften* (1966), 676-78

<sup>400</sup> Clausewitz [August-December 1809], 'Strategie 30-33 - Flußverteidigung und Übergang, Über Gebirgskrieg, Caesar, Strategie und Taktik', *Schriften* (1979), 50-61

<sup>401</sup> Hermann v. Boyen, *Beiträge zur Kenntniß des General von Scharnhorst und seiner amtlichen Thätigkeit in den Jahren 1808 bis 1813 mit besonderer Beziehung auf die über ihn in der Biographie des verstorbenen Minister Grafen Dohna ausgesprochene Urteile* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1833), 44

<sup>402</sup> Some documents are preserved and published. See Hahlweg, 'Vorbemerkung', *Schriften* (1966), 90-106. See also the overview of the documents on pages 184-208. The correspondence is on pages 106-84.

<sup>403</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 210 n.5

Marie and Clausewitz took part in several patriotic salons in Berlin. The most important was perhaps the one at Marie's friend *Frau* Caroline von Berg's (1760-1826). She was also a friend of Queen Louise, and her salon was therefore at the centre of social life. In her big house in Berlin's Tiergarten the circle of political and military reformers mingled with the cultural elite. Caroline was for example a friend and patron of Herder and Fichte as well as being acquainted with Goethe.<sup>404</sup> Clausewitz was also a member of the *Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*, a patriotic anti-Napoleonic society founded in Berlin in 1811. Members included the poet Achim von Arnim, the political scholar Adam Heinrich Müller, Fichte, Schleiermacher and Friedrich August von Staegemann, a diplomat and responsible for negotiating Prussia's war reparations.<sup>405</sup>

Napoleon's failure to conclude the campaign in Spain and Portugal gave hope and inspired plans for insurrection. Clausewitz made one study of the Peninsula War and guerrilla warfare in 1811.<sup>406</sup> Maybe the study of the war in the Vendée was also made at this time.<sup>407</sup> The reformers travelled meanwhile in Europe to seek silent alliances. Gneisenau had resigned from active service and travelled to possible coalition partners from July 1809 to June 1810, visiting Britain, Sweden and Russia. Scharnhorst visited St Petersburg and Vienna incognito between September 1811 and January 1812. The patriotic struggle for freedom against France was dubbed simply '*Die Gute Sache*'. For Marie, Gneisenau was the personification of 'the good cause'.<sup>408</sup>

In August and September 1809 Scharnhorst initiated a new, more dynamic, way of conducting military exercises, which would long remain with the Prussian army.<sup>409</sup> This new way of training was followed by intense tactical adaptation to cope with the predominant French way of waging war.<sup>410</sup> An important aspect was to counter skirmish, *Tirailleur*, tactics. In the summer of 1811 both Clausewitz and Tiedemann were deeply involved in codifying the tactical adoption, in new basic tactical *Grundsätze*, of the forthcoming *Exerzierreglement für die Infanterie*, issued on 15 January 1812.<sup>411</sup> Clausewitz's letter to Gneisenau on a specific tactical solution for this

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<sup>404</sup> See *Vom Leben am preußischen Hofe 1815-1852 Aufzeichnungen von Caroline v. Rochow g.b. Marwitz und Marie de la Notte-Founqué*, Ed. Luise v.d. Marwitz (Berlin: Mittler, 1908), 34 ff; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 104

<sup>405</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 212; Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger, *Die Berliner Salons: Mit historisch-literarischen Spaziergängen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 113-14; Elisabeth Krimmer & Patricia Anne Simpson, *Enlightened War German Theories and Cultures of Warfare From Frederick the Great to Clausewitz* (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), 10-11

<sup>406</sup> Clausewitz [1811], 'Précis de la guerre en Espagne et en Portugal', *Schriften* (1966), 604-11. See Hahlweg's introduction, 599-603

<sup>407</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11], 'Übersicht des Krieges in der Vendée 1793.', *Werke* 10/10, 321-47. Dated to 1811 by Caemmerer, *Clausewitz* (1905), 77

<sup>408</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 20 April 1814, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau* Vol 4/5, 248-49

<sup>409</sup> Clausewitz accompanied Scharnhorst who conducted the exercise on the behalf of the King. See Clausewitz to Marie, Rottmannshöfchen bei Königsberg 4 September, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 260-61

<sup>410</sup> See Paret, *York and the era of Prussian reform*

<sup>411</sup> *Exerzierreglement für die Infanterie der Kgl. Preussischen Armee*, 15 January 1812

manual indicated their working relation: 'I hope my dear friend that the tactical factory of Tiedemann-Clausewitz is thinking according to your *Grundsätzen* and views.'<sup>412</sup> By and large Scharnhorst's and Gneisenau's practical views and accomplishments were more or less made into abstract wisdom by Clausewitz.

Clausewitz spent August and September 1811 in lower Silesia. He stayed in well-known spa towns to recover health and inspect fortifications. The political situation deteriorated at the same time and the risk of war was once more clear and present. To Gneisenau he outlined ideas for making Silesia the 'new Spain' for Napoleon. The province was situated between the French Motherland and the Duchy of Warsaw created by Napoleon at Tilsit as a satellite state.<sup>413</sup> He pointed to the possibility and strength of defence, on which he would soon expatiate. Gneisenau was told he was the right man to pick up the 'Marshal's baton of Silesia'.<sup>414</sup> Clausewitz certainly hoped for an uprising, but at the end of September he realized that everything would return to routine: 'In addition the time for opening the *Berliner Kriegsschule* draws near, and I suppose it will be inevitable that I once again will evoke my abstract wisdom and like cited spirits *Gestalt* themselves by thick clouds of smoke and with just a thin shimmer, bring uncertain outlines before the student's eye.'<sup>415</sup>

A new plan to raise a German Legion was made in November 1811 by Clausewitz and Gneisenau. This was intended to join a possible British expeditionary force in western Germany. The political idea was to show a patriotic example to inspire further resistance.<sup>416</sup> Patriotism and the good cause became the alternative political way for Clausewitz. He certainly disagreed with the king's foreign policy, but understood also the need to wait for the army to improve fighting power, plus the importance of selecting a proper moment for going to war again. The way he thought strategy at this time was of course clearly influenced by the situation of having been overthrown and continually threatened by France's seemingly never-ceasing invincibility. The Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal inspired the reformer's strategies of insurrection.

#### LECTURER, PROPOUNDING RELEVANT CONCEPTS OF THE *KRIEGSKUNST*

The new *Kriegsschule* was founded in Berlin on 2 May 1810, envisioned by Scharnhorst as the supreme educational institution of the Army. Scharnhorst was forced to leave the Ministry of War in June due to French suspicion of his activities, but Fredrick Wilhelm kept him as a secret adviser anyway. He also remained head of the general staff and inspector of military education. Clausewitz joined the general staff on 19 July

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<sup>412</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 17 June 1811, *Schriften* (1966), 640-48 cf.644

<sup>413</sup> See Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Warmbrunn 8+18 Augusti 1811, Cudowa 26+28 Augusti 1811, Cudowa 2+6 September, *Schriften* (1966), 650-61

<sup>414</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Kudowa 13 September 1811, 'Die Operationen in Schlesien', *Schriften* (1966), 661-6

<sup>415</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Goldberg 24 September 1811, *Schriften* (1966), 666-68

<sup>416</sup> [Clausewitz November 1811], 'Gneisenau's Plan einer deutschen Legion', Georg Heinrich Pertz, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau*, vol2/5 (Berlin, Reimer, 1865), 685-88. Also printed in Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1, 421-25



and was promoted to Major.<sup>417</sup> In late August he finally got permission to marry Marie, and the wedding took place on 17 December. Clausewitz was transferred along with Tiedemann to the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* on 11 October just a couple of days before the first class started.

His main responsibility was to teach Small War and the duty of the general staff. The teaching position, or becoming 'professor' in his own words, was half against his will.<sup>418</sup> Tiedemann taught strategy and tactics, in addition he was responsible for coordinating the curriculum. Both lectured 156 hours during one year.<sup>419</sup> Clausewitz prepared extensive lecture notes, which he improved further for the second year.<sup>420</sup> *Kleiner Krieg*, i.e. Small War, was theoretically distinct from *großer Krieg*, Great War, which was taught as strategy in the *Kriegskunst*. Small War was understood as the independent use of small units, 20 to 400 soldiers, not directly connected to a larger battle.<sup>421</sup> Clausewitz also presented a brief overview of artillery.<sup>422</sup>

In June 1810 Clausewitz was in addition appointed tutor to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (1795-1861) in the *Kriegskunst*.<sup>423</sup> This honourable task continued from October 1810 to early summer of 1811, was resumed after the tour in Silesia in October and ended in March 1812. The cousin of the crown prince, Prince Friedrich of the Netherlands (1797-1881) joined the class in 1811. Clausewitz tailored his lectures according to the young age of his students, as outlined in a proposed curriculum to the prince's military governor Lieutenant-colonel von Gaudi.<sup>424</sup> He lectured the prince three times a week for 60 minutes at a time. This was in line with Scharnhorst's didactic model based on short lectures followed by independent work and reflection. Seemingly, Clausewitz enjoyed this arrangement and their relation. By implication he had the time to think thoroughly about the *Kriegskunst* and develop his own ideas more substantially.

The few remaining texts from the tutorial provide a valuable insight into his understanding of tactics and strategy in a didactic perspective prior to the fall of Napoleon. One remaining text served as an introduction to the study of major battles

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<sup>417</sup> When Clausewitz joined the GS it consisted of less than 20 officers and would rise to about 30 in 1812. See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 145 n.20

<sup>418</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 8 June 1810, *Schriften* (1966), 626-7

<sup>419</sup> Gottlieb Friedländer, *Die Königliche Allgemeine Kriegs-Schule und das höhere Militair-Bildungswesen 1765-1813* (Berlin: Mittler, 1854), 301-2. On the curriculum see 258-74. See also Hahlweg, 'Vorbemerkung', *Schriften* (1966), 208-23

<sup>420</sup> Clausewitz [October 1810-December 1811], 'Meine Vorlesungen über den Kleiner Krieg gehalten auf der Kriegs-Schule 1810 und 1811.', *Schriften* (1966), 226-598

<sup>421</sup> Clausewitz [October – December 1810], 'Einleitung in den Kleinen Krieg', *Schriften* (1966), 231-37

<sup>422</sup> Clausewitz [October 1810-June 11], 'Artillerie. Geschütze', *Schriften* (1966), 589-99. Probably also used for the tutorial of the royal princes.

<sup>423</sup> King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. von Preußen 1840, succeeded by his younger brother Wilhelm 1858 due to illness.

<sup>424</sup> Clausewitz [June-October 1810], 'Entwurf, der dem Herrn General von Gaudi vorgelegt wurde', *Vom Kriege*, 1043-46

and combats in 26 paragraphs.<sup>425</sup> Most of the ideas can also be found in a set of undated and unsigned manuscripts on the *Kriegskunst*.<sup>426</sup> The set from around 1810-1811 consisted of a preface stating the purpose, a polemic text on the present theoretical situation in the *Kriegskunst* and two short chapters analysing the main concepts.<sup>427</sup> The set also included some earlier drafts that addressed the same topics.<sup>428</sup> In these texts Clausewitz made a case against prevailing impersonal strategic systems. 'Our purpose is first to establish clear concepts of tactics and strategy; secondly to investigate what one can and should expect of the theory on these two parts in the art of war. From these two purposes we must make an observation pure and simple of the military literature and every now and then connect the investigations to prevailing standpoints.'<sup>429</sup> The idea of 'clear concepts' to grasp reality was as already mentioned a common way of expression at this time.

Clausewitz criticized the view in military literature that the *Kriegskunst* had reached the highest state of perfection (*Vollkommenheit*). He pointed to the question 'of what perfection – the theory of art in books or the real work of military art?' The reason for the many bad attempts to make theory of the *Kriegskunst* was a lack of proper philosophical spirit, which induced pedantic viewpoints missing the big picture; together with the establishment of false rules of thought. The cause of the lack of proper military literature was partly that officers were not scientifically trained and that it was difficult to achieve proper experience. Many believed, falsely, that historical studies could replace experience entirely. As an example Clausewitz argued that the study of theatre alone made no great actors. Mechanical education could not replace talent.

Clausewitz argued that the theory of war constructed in the previous ten-fifteen years, thus from 1795-97, was really bad. Theory *per se* was in a state of childhood, which

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<sup>425</sup> Clausewitz [October 1810-June 1811], 'Einleitung in das Studium der Schlachten und Gefechte. Für den Kronprinzen.', *Schriften* (1990), 107-21. See Hahlweg's note p.102-6.

<sup>426</sup> Hahlweg dated this set to 1809-12; see Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 17-22. The style is however somewhat repetitive inducing that the texts served as a platform for clearing out his own mind, suggesting an early date. The date could be 1809 but more probably 1810-11 as preparation for the tutorial duty as well as polemical debate. The set of texts was referred to by Hahlweg as the first outlines on the way to *Vom Kriege*. I prefer to pronounce the timely utility of them for his work connected to the military reform and education.

<sup>427</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Zweck des Werks', 22; 'Ueber den Zustand der Theorie der Kriegskunst', 23-44; 'Erstes Capitel Von der Kriegskunst überhaupt und ihrer Einteilung', 45-61; '2tes Kapitel Strategie und höhere Taktik. Grenzen zwischen beyden. Definition und weiter Eintheilung.', 62-68

<sup>428</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Vorrede', 73; 'Ueber die Theorie der Kriegskunst insbesondere vorzugleich der Strategie und Taktik', 74-77; '2tes Kapitel. Von der Kriegskunst überhaupt und ihrer Einteilung', 78-81; 'Beylage zu b', 82; 'Studien und Entwürfe zum 2.Kapitel', 83-7; '3tes Kapitel Die Kriegskunst im engern Sinn Ihre weitere Einteilung', 87-99,

<sup>429</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Zweck des Werks', 22 'Unsere Absicht ist erstens deutliche Begriffe von der Taktik und Strategie aufzustellen; zweitens zu untersuchen, was man von der Theorie dieser beyden Theile d[er] Kriegskunst erwarten kann und soll. Mit diesen beyden Zwecken haben wir schlechterdings eine Betrachtung der milit[ärischen] Litteratur und hin und wieder Untersuchungen über herrschende Meinungen verbinden müssen.'

was as Scharnhorst had depicted the *Kriegskunst*. The many disproportional military ideas circulating were to be considered a 'children's disease'. This was how Clausewitz understood the state of theory for the art of war. *Vom Kriege* was later developed to fill the gap of absent realistic theory, to think strategy properly. His understanding of military intellectual poverty was a major aspect of the problem he later tried to sort out. Logic was used to establish the proper form of strategic thought and make resilient propositions.<sup>430</sup> The poverty of military literature made him point anew to basic logic and the form of thought, the formal truth:

Those who do not just constitute theory by assembling single experiences, who also reason about this even further, those who also derive keys from these experiences, to establish new propositions and so on, can hardly go a safer way to convince themselves and others that they are not fantasizing but speaking reasonably, as if through the observation of the correct form (cf. think right) in the connection of their *Vorstellungen* with each other? If this form is violated by the connection of individual *Vorstellungen*, then everyone understands the individual *Vorstellungen*, but the whole idea is incomplete. It is so with composite *Vorstellungen* and entire treatises – these are elementary concepts of logic however and we would only insult our reader if we did not presuppose this understanding by them and admit us into further clarifications. Every *gebildete* man knows that formal truth is a *conditio sine qua non* of all truth and it consists only of the correct form and thus must arguably be damaged with it.<sup>431</sup>

The material truth was how the idea covered matter. The better the propositions of theory conveyed different subjects, the more perfect was theory.<sup>432</sup> The *Kriegskunst* was settled by war or, more precisely, by the means one employed to conduct war and the purposes one put forward in war, thus implicitly the political desire. The principle of classification was pinpointed to think truly about the art of war. Clausewitz cleaned up the conception by removing preparations for war such as the training of forces, the construction of fortifications, and procurement: 'The *Kriegskunst* is the use of existing

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<sup>430</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Ueber den Zustand der Theorie der Kriegskunst', 23-44, cf. 44

<sup>431</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Ueber den Zustand der Theorie der Kriegskunst', 23-44, cf. 28-29. 'Wer eine Theorie nicht bloß aus einzelnen zusammengereihten Erfahrungungen bestehen wer darüber auch noch raisonniren d.h. wer aus diesen Erfahrungungen Schlüsse ziehen, neue Sätze ableiten will usw., kann der wohl anders einen sichern Weg gehen und sich und andere überzeugen, daß er nicht phantasirt sondern vernünftig spricht, als durch die Beobachtung der richtigen Form in der Verbindung seiner Vorstellungen unter einander? - Wird diese Form bey der Verbindung einzelner Vorstellung verletzt, so versteht jedermann die einzelnen Vorstellungen, aber der Ganze Gedanke ist unverständlich. Eben so ist es mit zusammengesetzten Vorstellungen und ganzen Abhandlungen – doch dieß sind Elementarbegriffe der Logik und wir würden unsere Leser beleidigen, wenn wir sie nicht bey ihnen voraussetzen und uns in weitere Erklärungen darüber einlassen wollten. Jeder gebildete Mann weiß, daß die formale Wahrheit *conditio sine qua non* aller Wahrheit ist und daß sie bloß in der richtigen Form besteht und also wohl mit ihr verletzt werden muß.'

<sup>432</sup> See about logic Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 21-54

means for the [political] purpose put forward.'<sup>433</sup> Clausewitz's definition of the *Kriegskunst* in 1810-1811 resembled the notes from 1804. Fichte's logic from *Naturrecht* about the purpose of war was also recalled, probably reinforced, by the devastating events of Tilsit.

Our definition of the *Kriegskunst* is thus the following. It is the teaching of the use of fighting forces for the purpose laid down. This purpose thus becomes the purpose of the war and then one wonders whether this is always one and the same. Certainly. The politician can, strictly speaking, only connect two different purposes to war: either he desires to annihilate his enemy entirely, abolish his existence as a state, or he just desires to dictate terms for peace. This is the case in offensive as well as defensive war. From this political purpose follows the military immediately: such weakening of enemy power, that the enemy cannot continue the war without endangering his entire existence. This purpose one achieves through annihilation of his state powers and fighting forces and this annihilation up to the given degree is the actual purpose of the *Kriegskunst*.<sup>434</sup>

Combat, *Gefecht*, was propounded as the basic effective principle of war and all warlike action could be traced back to this. Clausewitz had in 1804 depicted the 'idea of combat' as the foundation of war, so he was now just continuing this view. He also pointed to the impact of progress. Actual combat was not necessary to injure the enemy and fulfil the purpose of war. The multidimensional relations of civilized states had produced a '*künstliche Gewebe*', i.e. an artificial web, which made a diversity of means possible to arrange for the final political purpose of war. To Clausewitz combat was the basic means and logical focal point for enforcing political conflicts; but the state system as such opened the way for an indefinite field, or web, of other means.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), 'Erstes Capitel Von der Kriegskunst überhaupt und ihrer Einteilung', 45-61, cf. 46. 'Die Kriegskunst ist der Gebrauch der vorhandenen Mittel zum vorgesetzten Zweck.'

<sup>434</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11], '2tes Kapitel Strategie und höhere Taktik. Grenzen zwischen beyden. *Definition* und weiter Eintheilung.' *Schriften* (1990), 62-68, cf. 62-63. 'Unsere Definition der Kriegskunst ist also die folgende. Sie ist die Lehre von dem Gebrauch der Streitkräfte zum vorgesetzten Zweck. Dieser Zweck ist also der Zweck des Krieges und da fragt es sich ist dieser immer ein und derselbe. Allerdings. Der Politiker kann eigentlich nur zwey verschiedene Zwecke mit dem Krieg verbinden, entweder er will seinen Gegner ganz vernichten d.h. seine Staatenexistenz aufheben, oder er will ihm blos Bedingungen bey dem Frieden vorschreiben. Dieß ist der Fall im offensiv wie im defensiv unternommen Krieg. Aus diesen politischen Zwecken folgt der militärische unmittelbar: eine solche Schwächung der feindlichen Kraft, daß der Feind den Krieg entweder gar nicht ohne die Gefahr seiner ganzen Existenz fortsetzen kann. Diesen Zweck erreicht man nur durch Vernichtung seiner Staats- und Streitkräfte und diese Vernichtung nun bis zu den oben angegebenen Grad fortzusetzen ist der eigentliche Zweck der Kriegskunst.'

<sup>435</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11] in *Schriften* (1990), '2tes Kapitel Strategie und höhere Taktik. Grenzen zwischen beyden. *Definition* und weiter Eintheilung.', 62-68, cf. 63-64

Some basic ideas about war and strategy can also be found in the first lecture of *Kleiner Krieg*. Clausewitz also expressed his growing ideas on the *Kriegskunst* very clearly in a letter to Gneisenau on 17 June 1811, not sure if he had told him before.<sup>436</sup> Clausewitz is often interpreted as a unilateral prophet of combat as the only means in war, which is not entirely correct. It is true that he tried to re-establish the logical status of combat in the core of military thought to think strategy properly in the shadow of Napoleon. But he clearly also recognized other means in practice as the quotes above illustrate.

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This chapter has pointed out Clausewitz's frank objection to the German way of thinking in the bitter aftermath of defeat. This was identified as a major cause of the disconnection of Prussian visions and Napoleonic realities. The chapter has stressed his basic objection to the prevailing view of *Kriegskunst* as a matter of enigmatic combinations and fixed abstract principles. It has explained that Clausewitz analysed strategy during the first phase of reform foremost in terms of pragmatism, stressing the importance of purpose as well as the elusiveness of victory as means to success.

Clausewitz and the reformers regarded individual commitment as crucial to boost moral strength and infuse a warlike mind-set in the army. This was pointed out as the 'true *Geist* of war'. Thus, at this point of time, the inner truth of war was warlike commitment to fight, rather than arbitrary principles of military conduct. The period 1810-1811 was identified as the period when Clausewitz started to write and think more deeply about strategy. He analysed the *Kriegskunst* theoretically with the immediate practical purpose of lecturing. He also contributed as a member of the inner circle of reformers to develop new more apt precepts for the conduct of war. Clausewitz's deeds had clearly a practical purpose in this period, which seems quite natural in the situation, recovering from defeat.

Finally, Schleiermacher's romantic conception of religion as '*Anschauung und Gefühl*', view and feeling, has merit for understanding *Politik* as ideology. The Prussian Movement driving the reform was patriotic *Politik*, which rivalled established views and structures. Schleiermacher theorized '*Anschauung und Gefühl*' as independent of moral doctrine and metaphysics. To fight for the idea of Prussia and Germany embodied a feeling for doing the right and noble, above ordinary party politics and quibbles. The hard-core patriots and reformers pursuing the 'Good Cause' regarded themselves as good Germans doing the right, even if their deeds sometime contradicted the policy of the ruler and the far borders of Kantian moral doctrine.

The Prussian reformers nurtured patriotism as a means to make the army morally stronger. The concept of citizen soldier was used to raise warlike energy by individual enthusiasm to fight for the good cause of freedom and dignity. The chapter suggests that we should understand patriotism as a tenant of *Politik* in this context. After Waterloo Clausewitz used hatred and enmity to catch the origins of warlike energy, but subsumed these sentiments in 1827 as aspects of *Politik* to make his theoretical construction coherent.

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<sup>436</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 17 June 1811, *Schriften* (1966), 640-48

## 5. THE GOOD CAUSE

### TO WAR FOR FREEDOM, HATRED AND DIGNITY

I apostatize from an irresponsible hope for salvation by the hand of chance...; from the false resignation of suppressed intellectual faculties; from the unreasonable mistrust in the powers given to us from God; from the shameless sacrifice of all honour of the state and the people, all personal, all human dignity.

I believe and profess, that a people has nothing higher to value than the dignity and freedom of their being; that they should defend this to the last drop of blood. That they have no more holy duty to fulfil, no higher law of thought to obey...That the honour of the king and the government is one with the honour of the people and the only palladium of their welfare [cf. Greek mythology Pallas Athena as safeguard]; that a people is invincible in their noble fight for freedom; that the downfall [*der Untergang*] of this freedom after a bloody and honourable fight itself secures the rebirth of this people and a new tree of secure roots from which the core of life starts to strike.<sup>437</sup>

This chapter elaborates Clausewitz's experience of war from 1812 to 1815, which he later used as inspiration and epitome from which to theorize strategy. The quote reflects that he had conceded enough and shows the tone used to motivate the reformer's wish to fight Napoleonic preponderance in early 1812, contrary to the king's official policy. 'The Good Cause', the expression used among the reformers to reflect and motivate the struggle for freedom, translates finally into warlike action, which was indeed the ultimate purpose of the Prussian reform. War became a public

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<sup>437</sup> Clausewitz [completed at the latest 16 February 1812], 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', *Schriften* (1966), 682-751 cf. 688-89. 'Ich sage mich los von der leichtsinnigen Hofnung einer Errettung durch die Hand des Zufalls. ...Von der falschen Resignation eines unterdrückten Geistesvermögens. Von dem unvernünftigen Mißtrauen in die uns von Gott gegebenen Kräfte. Von der schamlosen Aufopferung aller Ehre des Staates und Volks, aller persönlichen, aller Menschenwürde. Ich glube und bekenne, daß ein Volk nichts höher zu achten hat, als die Würde und Freiheit seines Daseyns. Daß es diese mit dem letzten Blutopfern vertheidigen soll. Daß es keine heilige Pflicht zu erfüllen hat, keinem höhern gesetz zu gehorchen...Daß die Ehre des Königs und die Regierung eines ist, mit der Ehre des Volks, und das einzige Palldium seines Wohls. Daß ein Volk unüberwindlich ist in dem großmüthigen Kampf um seine Freiheit. Daß selbst der Untergang dieser Freiheit nach einem blutigen und ehrenvollen Kampf die Wiedergeburt des Volks sichert und der Kern des Lebens ist, aus dem einst ein neuer Baum die sichern Wurzeln schlägt.'

expression of *Politik*, simply and easily motivated by longing for freedom and dignity, fuelled by hatred.

The chapter addresses: first, the *Bekenntnisdenschrift*, which spelled out the reformers' political and military posture to finally fight all-out for freedom as indicated in the quote. The text reflected patriotism as *Politik*, ultimately as a warlike struggle and action when no decent alternative can be identified. Münkler has labelled this posture the existential view of war. In addition, the essay *Die Wichtigsten Grundsätze des Krigführens* written to conclude the Crown Prince' tutorials is briefly addressed. This text was written on the road to Russia and the fundamental precepts outlined should be understood in that context. Secondly, Clausewitz's efforts and suffering in Russia are examined until the crucial turn of tide manifested by the convention of Tauroggen in December 1812.

Thirdly, the very happy time as Russian liaison during the Spring Campaign of 1813, which took him to the inner circle of the Prussian HQ, reunited with his friends. Fourthly, I review Clausewitz's activity as Chief of General Staff in the Russo-German Legion; part of the Allied Northern Army fighting on the flank during the Autumn Campaign of 1813 and the Winter Campaign of 1814 that ended in Paris. After peace, the period out in the political cold was troublesome for Clausewitz.

Finally, when Bonaparte returned to France for his final 100 days in power, Clausewitz was allowed to reassume the Blue colours. He was helped by his friends back into the core of the Army. He acted as Chief of the General Staff in one of Prussia's four Army Corps, which terminated in Waterloo. Clausewitz experienced the night before this epic battle as the 'longest night of his life', thus the utmost challenge. The chapter ends in the outskirts of Paris in late June 1815, when the situation was still uncertain regarding fighting in Paris and the unfolding transition to peace.

The chapter notes Clausewitz's experience as the foundation for his ideas and concepts. They include as combat, campaign and war as open-ended activities. One enters a course of events without knowing their unfolding and results on a larger scale. The atmosphere of war: danger, physical exertion, friction between idea and unfolding, uncertainty and unreliable intelligence – all enhance the difficulty to see things 'right' in high military command. That a standstill can contribute in a way similar to action to the aim of campaigns. The conflict over Allied strategy in early 1814 is observed. On one hand the prevalent views of limited strategic aim nested in Metternich's policy of bargaining peace with Bonaparte; on the other a strategy aiming to overthrow Bonaparte from power, nested in the Command of the Prussian Army. Clausewitz's influence on Gneisenau is here observed.

#### SPELLING OUT THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY

The relation of France and Russia in the spirit of Tilsit deteriorated little by little from 1809 to a final ultimatum in early 1812. Napoleon decided to take action and restore his authority from Tilsit and on 27 January 1812 issued a list of objections to Russia and his German allies.<sup>438</sup> Napoleon wanted to remove Prussia from neutrality and demanded 20,000 troops, free access to staging areas and the main avenues of

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<sup>438</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 739-49

approach through Prussia towards western Russia. Friedrich Wilhelm complied and agreed in a treaty signed on 24 February 1812, which fully incorporated Prussia in the *Rheinbund* along with the other German satellites. He thought this was the only way to prevent the complete fall of Prussia and his regime.

Support of Napoleon and obedience to his will were unthinkable to Clausewitz and most of the patriotic reformers. They regarded the king's compliance as the utter dishonour of the state and the policy induced a group of officers to resign. This type of demonstration, unwillingness and disobedience had never happened before in Prussia. It showed that patriotism was now a true rival to the principles of absolute power and blind military subordination; in addition to royal sentiment.

Clausewitz wrote at the beginning of February 1812 his most important political text, his *Bekenntnisdenschrift* on behalf of the rebellion reformers who saw resistance as the only political way forward.<sup>439</sup> This text was the political confession of the reformers to justify to the world resistance rather than obedience. Some parts were dictated by Clausewitz and written by Marie, who shared her husband's energetic patriotism. The memorandum was circulated to the group of hard-core reformers, such as Boyen and Gneisenau, who added their comments. The first part analysed the political situation in Prussia and its prevailing system of political thought, deeply refuted by the reformers.

The second part of the *Bekenntnisdenschrift* analysed the strategic situation of Prussia as squeezed between France and Russia. A strategy of resistance based on the arming of the people was outlined in the third part, which Clausewitz supported with a military-theoretical observation on the prospect of defence. The king may have read the third part but ratified the Franco-Prussian Treaty anyway, on 31 March.<sup>440</sup> The political influence in the *Kriegskunst* was clarified as conceptualising forward defence as the strongest form of war. Clausewitz's conceptual view of the basic intimacy of *Politik* and *Kriegskunst* is thus very clear 1812, which disprove interpretations of the twist 1827 as a fundamental shift indeed.

The difference between a war of aggression and a war of defence permeates both parts [of the *Kriegskunst* – strategy and tactics], and it extends even into the *Politik*. Defence can thus be tactical, strategic, political. Political defence is without doubt when a nation strives for preservation, and not for conquest (no matter what the form) which does not concern the actual war; this could however substantially influence the spirit of the army.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, February 1812, *Schriften* (1966), 681-82; Clausewitz [completed at the latest 16 February 1812], 'Bekenntnisdenschrift', *Schriften* (1966), 682-751, first published in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol3/5, Beilage 1. 'Des Oberstlieutenants Carl v. Clausewitz Denkschrift vom Februar 1812', 622-76

<sup>440</sup> See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 216-21

<sup>441</sup> Clausewitz [completed at the latest 16 February 1812], 'Bekenntnisdenschrift', *Schriften* (1966), 682-751 cf.742. 'Der Unterschied von Angriffs- und Vertheidigungs-Krieg geht durch beide Theile [der Kriegskunst - Strategie and Taktik] durch, und erstreckt sich sogar bis in die Politik. Die Vertheidigung kann also seyn, taktisch, strategisch, politisch. Die politische



Consequently, the political animation of defence induced Clausewitz to refute earlier views that war could not be waged successfully within the country's borders; something even Scharnhorst had concluded about Prussia in 1806. Three inherent intentions and related advantages for the conduct of defence were explained with different tactical and strategic implications. The strength was, in Clausewitz's opinion, the possibility of '*Abwarten*', awaiting the enemy's offensive unfolding and just fighting when it was necessary. To be in place meant to be able to utilize local conditions and to be close to sources of support. He outlined the operational idea of active defence (*actif vertheidigen*) that resembled Scharnhorst's, but was about combining energetic action with the inherent possibility of defence. Clausewitz had told Gneisenau about this approach in June 1811: 'In the notion of *Abwarten* [awaiting] lies the main conception of the defence; in a strategic sense defence is nothing more than awaiting the enemy' unfolding in my theatre of war, and then attacking him.'<sup>442</sup>

Tiedemann resigned directly and joined the Russian army to fight French dominance. Scharnhorst was not allowed to resign and the king put him on continuous vacation in Silesia instead. Gneisenau and Boyen were sent on secret missions abroad. Clausewitz told the crown prince that the tutorial had to cease. The tutorial was obviously much appreciated, which a letter from Gaudi, the prince's military supervisor, indicated.<sup>443</sup> Clausewitz replied to the crown prince, thanked him warmly for the gift he had received and expressed a sincere belief in the prince in his future difficult role.<sup>444</sup> The 2nd French Corps entered Berlin in late March and at the same time Clausewitz left the city tormented by severe headaches. He travelled to his brother Wilhelm and his sister Johanna in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder. A couple of days later he continued to Silesia to act briefly as Scharnhorst's adjutant.<sup>445</sup>

Clausewitz wished to conclude and summarize his tutorial in the art of war for the seventeen-year-old crown prince properly. With Scharnhorst in Finkelstein he finalized the piece that became longer than planned, *Die Wichtigsten Grundsätze...*, which was an up-to-date summary of the most important precepts of the conduct of war.<sup>446</sup> The text combined patriotic sentiments by emphasizing courage and determination with his understanding of Napoleon's strategic approach. His first strategic *Grundsatz* was

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Verteidigung welche darin besteht, daß eine Nation für ihre Erhaltung, und nicht für Eroberung streite (gleichgültig in welcher Form übrigens) geht dem eigentlichen Krieg nicht an, wie wohl sie auf den Geist der Armee einen bedeutenden Einfluß hat und in sofern wichtig werden kann.'

<sup>442</sup> Clausewitz letter to Gneisenau, 17 June 1811, in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1966), 644. 'In dem Begriff des *Abwartens* liegt der eigentliche Hauptbegriff der Defensive; strategisch ist eben so die Verteidigung nicht anderes als das *Abwarten* bis der Feind in mein *Kriegstheater* vorrückt, und ihn darin anfallen.'

<sup>443</sup> Gaudi to Clausewitz, Berlin 26 March 1812, Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 1, 153-54

<sup>444</sup> Clausewitz to the Crown Prince, Berlin 29 March 1812, *Schriften* (1979), 169-71

<sup>445</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Liegnitz, 2/3/4 April, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 270-73; See also Max Lehmann, *Scharnhorst*, Vol2:2 (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886-87), 453-54

<sup>446</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Frankenstein 12 April 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 273-75

consequently to employ all forces of the state against the enemy with the utmost effort.<sup>447</sup> Clausewitz observed the great potential of using the strategic defence to absorb enemy power and switch to the offensive after an initial defensive victory. He more or less turned around Napoleon's preferred strategic offensive approach, which relied on an initial, decisive offensive victory. This became his core idea of strategy and is more or less literally clarified in the same way in Book 6 of *Vom Kriege*:

Finally to observe in respect of the strategic defensive, that it only serves to fight and win the first major successes, because it is stronger *per se* than the offensive, and then, when this purpose is accomplished and peace does not immediately follow, then wider success can only be accomplished by the offensive; those who always remain on the defensive will put themselves in great trouble, always conducting war at their own expense. This a state can only endure for a certain time, and it will also, when it exposes itself to the blows of the enemy, without retaliating, end up exhausted and defeated. One has to begin with the defensive, to be able to conclude safely with the offensive.<sup>448</sup>

The text soon gained wider attention and was circulated internally in the military community. Marie later characterised the essay as the germ of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>449</sup> It is important, however, to consider the situation in which it was written and not draw the too-far-reaching conclusions. The mature work contained many themes and preferences clarified before the final campaigns, but by then had a deeper level of analysis.

## RUSSIA 1812

Clausewitz posted his resignation from the army on the 18 April in Frankenstein, (Polish *Ząbkowice Śląskie*) south of Breslau in lower Silesia, giving as the reason private affairs.<sup>450</sup> Scharnhorst and Boyen speculated that his request would be turned down; if

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<sup>447</sup> Clausewitz [Before 13 April 1812], 'Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichtes bei SR. königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen', *Vom Kriege*, 1047-86, cf. 1070. The essay was sent to the Crown Prince on 13 April, according to the letter; Clausewitz to Marie, Frankenstein 12 April 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 271-72. The text was published 1834 as a complement to *Vom Kriege* part III.

<sup>448</sup> Clausewitz [Before 13 April April 1812], 'Die Wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens', *Vom Kriege*, 1047-1086 cf. 1078. 'Endlich ist in Rücksicht auf die strategische Defensive zu bemerken, daß sie, weil sie an sich stärker ist als die Offensive nur dazu dienen soll, die ersten großen Erfolge zu erfechten, und daß, wenn dieser Zweck erreicht ist und der Frieden nicht unmittelbar darauf erfolgt, die weitem Erfolge nur durch die Offensive erreicht werden können; denn wer immer defensiv bleiben will, setzt sich dem großen Nachteil aus, immer auf eigene Kosten den Krieg zu führen. Dies hält ein jeder Staat nur eine gewisse Zeit aus, und er würde also, wenn er sich den Stößen seines Gegners aussetzte, ohne je wieder zu stoßen, höchstwahrscheinlich am Ende ermatten und unterliegen. Man muß mit der Defensive anfangen, damit man um so sicher mit der Offensive endigen könne.'

<sup>449</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz [Potsdam 30 June 1832], 'Vorrede', *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf.174

<sup>450</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Frankenstein 18 April 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 276-79

so Clausewitz would renew the request.<sup>451</sup> The king answered already on 23 April, coldly, in a single sentence: 'Regarding your request of 12 April I notify you with these words of my permission to resign.' Clausewitz decided to hold to his intention to leave Prussia and fight France in the Russian Army. He felt uneasy about the king's short tone and the crown prince's silence over his piece on the conduct of war.<sup>452</sup> He left Prussia on 2 May, estimating his time of arrival in Petersburg to 18 May.

After some considerations, Clausewitz took the shortest route through the Duchy of Warsaw, a French satellite state created by the Treaty of Tilsit. Along the way he met scornful and aspiring people who evoked his contempt.<sup>453</sup> On leaving the Prussian army he had received more pay than expected and could afford to travel by coach. War was in the air; rumours circulated of an impending Russian offensive, the Tsar had moved his headquarters to Wilna (Vilnius) and plunder was occurring along the road. The unfolding of events was still uncertain, but to be more secure he bought a pair of pistols in Breslau. The headache from Berlin had not disappeared, making him think he had got 'rheumatism in the head'.<sup>454</sup> His contempt for Polish egoism as well as anti-Semitic sentiments emerged on a couple of occasions in his summary of the journey across Polish territory.<sup>455</sup>

Gneisenau had meanwhile been on a secret mission abroad to estimate the strength of the Russian Army. His result was presented to Tsar Alexander in a memorandum on 20 May, which outlined a possible Russian strategy for the impending war. In the enclosed letter Clausewitz was introduced and seemingly his recent essay for the crown prince suggested as new doctrine.

*Herr von Clausewitz, whom Your Royal Highness has accepted for your service, possesses a first-rate mind and profound knowledge of the *Kriegskunst*, will be able to tell the same about *Generalstabsdienst* [service of GS] as I have done, in addition elucidate everything else that the memorandum addresses. He has written an instruction (direction) for Generals in just a few pages, which surpasses anything published of this kind, and deserves to be translated into Russian, to finally sweep away the precepts [*Grundsätze*], which the scholarly *Systemwuth* [destructive and stupid passion for military scientific system<sup>456</sup>], or ignorance, or *Korporalwuth* [the destructive and stupid passion of senior officers for minor details] has introduced into the *Kriegskunst*.<sup>457</sup>*

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<sup>451</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Breslau 24 April 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 280-81

<sup>452</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Breslau 28 April 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 281-2. See also Hahlweg, *Clausewitz: Soldat-Politiker-Denker*, 33; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 219-20

<sup>453</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Graudenz 5 May 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 283

<sup>454</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Gumbinnen 8 May 1812 [Gusev], *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 283-86

<sup>455</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Kwaydany Lithuania 15 May 1812 [Kėdainiai – Kedahnen?], *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 283-86. The single note was later used by National socialist propaganda and studies to promote anti-Semitism.

<sup>456</sup> See 'Wuth' in Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 4. (Leipzig: 1801), 1637-38 [Online version] URL: <http://www.zeno.org/Adelung-1793/A/Wuth,+die?hl=wuth> accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>457</sup> Gneisenau to Tsar Alexander I, Riga 20 May 1812, in Pertz, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau*, vol 2, 285. "Herr von Clausewitz den E.K.H. in Ihren Dienst

Clausewitz arrived happily in Wilna same day and met Gneisenau and Ludwig *Graf* von Chasôt (1763-1813) on the following days.<sup>458</sup> The latter was also a hard-core patriot who had resigned from Prussian service and was known for his political outspokenness. He became the first commander of the Russian-German Legion, *Flügeladjutant* to the Tsar and promoted to Russian colonel before he died in the following year.<sup>459</sup> Clausewitz experienced great uncertainty in May and June. When he received intelligence that Bonaparte had arrived in Dresden he estimated that war was going to break out within the next fortnight.

His estimation of the effects of the weather on the western theatres supported this conclusion. *Operieren*, i.e. the conduct of operations would only be possible until the first day of November on Russian soil, which excluded the prospect of a winter campaign. In this urgent situation he was impressed by the Russian calmness and told Marie: 'I have never seen war break out with such stillness...'<sup>460</sup>

Bureaucracy delayed Clausewitz's change from blue uniform to green. He lodged initially with Karl-Ludwig v. Phull, who had worked alongside Scharnhorst and Massenbach on the general staff before the defeat of 1806. He had escaped criticism and had been military tutor to the Tsar since 1807, now promoted to Russian Lieutenant-general and the Tsar's military advisor. Clausewitz appreciated Phull's taking care of him as a newcomer, but later severely criticized his generalship, describing him as lost in the romantic history of Caesar and Friedrich the Great with no material feeling for the present. Phull personified '*Korporalwuth*' in Gneisenau's word by losing his head at the slightest problem and diving into the smallest details, losing the overall view. Phull had insisted on building the fortified camp at Drissa, where Clausewitz spent some time and found it to have an unclear strategic function.<sup>461</sup>

The French campaign opened late in the evening of 23 June when the *Grande Armée* started crossing the border over the River Niemen in a non-defended area. Bonaparte had been convinced for some time that Tsar Alexander was pursuing a hostile intent and preparing for war. The Russian ambassador Kurakin had presented something resembling an ultimatum when France had mobilized on German soil in April. If France evacuated Prussia and established a neutral zone between the two powers and so on, then the Tsar would consider attending to the complaints. Napoleon's purpose in going

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genommen hat, einer der besten Köpfe und voll tiefer Kenntnisse in der Kriegskunst, wird dasjenige was ich über den Generalstabsdienst gesagt habe, wie Alles übrige was diese Denkschrift enthält, weiter ausführen. Er hat in wenig Blättern eine Anweisung für die Generäle geschriben, welche Alles übertrifft was in dieser Art erschienen ist, und in das Russische übersetzt zu werden verdient, um endlich die Grundsätze aufzutreiben, welche die gelehrte Systemwuth, oder die Unwissenheit, oder die Korporalwuth in die Kriegskunst eingeführt haben."

<sup>458</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Wilna 23 May 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 288-89

<sup>459</sup> Hans Saring, 'Chasôt, Ludwig Egmont Adolph Graf von', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 3 (1957), 195 [Online version] URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd135719445.html> accessed 11 August 2011

<sup>460</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Wilna 28 May 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 289

<sup>461</sup> Clausewitz to Tiedemann, Lager bei Drissa 28 June 1812, *Schriften* (1979), 175-76

to war was in simple terms to compel Russia to remain a faithful partner in the economic blockade of Britain.<sup>462</sup>

Clausewitz experienced the limitations of language in a multinational staff. He left the Tsar's Headquarters in mid-July to serve in a cavalry corps under General Peter von der Phalen (1777-1864), which was acting as rearguard (*arrière-garde*). Phalen asked in passing if Clausewitz could speak Russian, to which Clausewitz answered, just a few phrases. The Russians had hardly any knowledge of French or German. Clausewitz realized this situation would hamper his performance and proposed he should act as adjutant instead of the corps' chief of general staff. This was refused by Phalen; so Clausewitz felt he was in a 'false position', unable to perform due to the language barrier. The corps experienced harsh conditions in late July and August, constantly on the move over vast areas, sleeping under the sky, with little food and water. Several minor but bloody combats were fought, such as Witbesk on 25-27 July.

Clausewitz was satisfied to do what he had come for and expected that the first major battle would take place soon.<sup>463</sup> This happened at Smolensk on 16-19 August, and ended in a minor French victory that killed around 10-14,000 on both sides. Napoleon lacked the usual fighting verve that had made him so successful in exploiting pursuit to the utmost when the enemy fell back.<sup>464</sup> After about three weeks Clausewitz transferred to General Uvarov's cavalry corps. He experienced with this unit the brutal battle of Borodino on 7 September. He came even closer to danger three days later when the corps fought a bloody night rearguard action in which his horse was wounded. The main battle sought by Napoleon turned out to be indecisive, but losses were high on both sides.<sup>465</sup> Napoleon estimated that he had to aim for Moscow to bring Tsar Peter to discuss peace. In the middle of September, meanwhile, Clausewitz regarded the strategic situation as rather good, because the Russian forces had regained fighting power much better than the *Grande Armée*.

In the retreat towards and through Moscow Clausewitz experienced the tactics of scorched earth. His corps marched as rearguard through Moscow on 14 September. Most of the people had already been evacuated so as to leave nothing for the approaching aggressor. Clausewitz saw the streets covered in severely wounded people who had been left behind. Near midnight, Marshal Murat and the French avant-guard entered the city and on the following day Napoleon took up his quarters in the Kremlin. The very same night, Clausewitz saw from the eastern side of the city how fires broke out. His letter to Marie described sensitively the horrible view of

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<sup>462</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 739-49

<sup>463</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Doroghobusch between Smolensk and Moscow 12/24 August 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 293-96

<sup>464</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 784-90

<sup>465</sup> Chandler suggests that French losses were 30 000 to 50 000 and the Russians suffered around 44 000 casualties. The French also suffered severe losses of Generals; Marshal Davot was injured, 14 Lieutenant-Generals and 33 Major-Generals were dead or wounded. See Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 806-7

Moscow burning for three days, knowing that 26,000 wounded people were trapped in the fire and burned to death.<sup>466</sup>

The blunt Russian withdrawal from Moscow indicated politically to Napoleon that the tsar would not bend the knee and sue for peace. Napoleon finally decided on 18 October, after much agony, to retreat and leave Moscow.<sup>467</sup> Thus a military victory seemingly great, turned out to have limited political effect, a condition later conceptualized by Clausewitz as the culmination point of victory, underpinned by his logic that '... every offensive [campaign], which is not enough to get peace, must necessarily end in defence'.<sup>468</sup>

Clausewitz had a narrow but lucky escape, while many of his German colleagues died or were wounded. On the road to Moscow he had learned that Tiedemann had been killed in action outside Riga on 22 August. His dear friend had tragically died from a German pistol bullet fired by a hussar from the Prussian auxiliary corps in Napoleon's coalition. Clausewitz mourned Tiedemann as a 'brother', but was decorated and promoted to Russian colonel to take up his friend's position. Note that Clausewitz's brother Wilhelm served Prussian auxiliary corps, which might indicate a reason to their less intimate relationship after the wars.

In this difficult time Clausewitz was informed of charges against him raised in the Berlin *Kammergericht*, i.e. High Court, on 20 August. His formal request to resign had not included information about his intention to enter Russian service. Accordingly, he had acted without the king's permission, which was illegal. The newspapers demanded his presence and the court sequestered all his property in absentio. The demand was to be renewed in March the following year.<sup>469</sup> At this moment, Clausewitz felt trapped; fighting for the future in a distant land, not knowing what course the war would take and treated as a criminal by the rulers of his homeland. 'This is hard', he told Marie, 'for anyone like me who almost constantly lives in the future.'<sup>470</sup> To overcome and to be able to fight alongside his compatriots he strove to join the German Legion that being organised in General Wittgenstein's northern sector.

The French retreat was scheduled to start on 20 October. Napoleon however brought forward the movement order by twenty-four hours due to confusion about enemy reinforcements and intentions. The *Grande Armée* started to retreat westwards early in the morning of 19 October after 35 days in Moscow and 120 days into the campaign. This epic moment when offensive political military energy and success reached the

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<sup>466</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, between Moskow and Kaluga 18/30 September 1812; Ibid., Petersburg 15/27 October; Ibid., 23 October/4 November, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 296-302

<sup>467</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 813-23

<sup>468</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Über den Kulminationspunkt des Sieges', *Vom Kriege* 7: unnumbered chapter, 935-45, cf. 943. '...jeder Angriff, der nicht bis zum Frieden reicht, notwendig mit einer Verteidigung endigen muß.'

<sup>469</sup> See Max Lehman, *Knesebeck und Schön. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Freiheitskriege* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1875), 53-55

<sup>470</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, St. Petersburg 29 October/10 November 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 302-03

apogee certainly later influenced Clausewitz's conception of the culmination point at which equilibrium turned around and started to work for the defender. The first snow started to fall on 3 November, rather as Clausewitz had estimated the effect of climate on the theatre in late May.<sup>471</sup>

Clausewitz reached Petersburg in mid-October, but soon felt lonely. At the end of October he finally received a decision to take up a new position in Wittgenstein's corps, which was then deployed between the Düna and the Dnieper behind the main bulk of the *Grande Armée*. He hoped to be in place around New Year and for the German Legion to be ready for action so he could do his best.<sup>472</sup> Gneisenau was told that Phull had left Russia for an 'indefinite vacation' in England. Prior to Phull's departure Clausewitz had sent him 'a short history of their campaign'.<sup>473</sup> This history might have been used or incorporated in the later written memorial text, which evaluated Phull extensively.<sup>474</sup>

However, the transfer came through much faster and he was in place with Wittgenstein's forces just a couple of weeks later. In the bitter cold, he experienced the disastrous French crossing of the Beresina 25-29 November. 'I write to you [Marie] between dead bodies and those dying exposing their human spirits, and thousands of ghostlike human beings moving around screaming and fleeing, begging me in vain for bread. May God soon change these scenes!' This 'bloody page of history' was impossible to describe in detail at that moment, but now he thought Europe could be saved and peace restored if the German sovereigns could cooperate.<sup>475</sup>

'No French soldier here looks human anymore', he wrote to Stein a couple of days later. Clausewitz was eager to tell his political peer about the human tragedy that had taken place around the Beresina. It was almost a miracle according to Clausewitz's description, but also a crucial, unexpected strategic event, as if Bonaparte had lost his army in one blow. It seemed as if a higher power had withdrawn support for Bonaparte this time. He and 40,000 soldiers were dragged down in a deep hole, in which he had to lose for the first time. Hunger had finally showed itself as the arbiter (*der Gebieter*) of Bonaparte.

Russian cavalry pursued the survivors and tried to cut off their retreat. Clausewitz doubted strongly that Bonaparte would be able to save as many as 20,000 soldiers over the border, which would severely limit his power and create a completely new strategic situation. He also took the opportunity to assure Stein of his loyalty, perhaps

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<sup>471</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 813-35

<sup>472</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, St. Petersburg 31 October/12 November 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 303-04

<sup>473</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, St. Petersburg 29 October/10 November, *Schriften* (1990), 139-42

<sup>474</sup> Clausewitz [1823-early 24], 'Zu den Memoiren. Der Russische Feldzug', *Schriften* (1990), 729-62

<sup>475</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, At Borssow on the Beresina, 17/29 November 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 304-5. 'Ich schreibe Dir zwischen Leichen und Sterbenden unter rauchenden Trümmern, und Tausende von gespensterartigen Menchen zihen vorüber und schreien und flehen und meinen vergebens nach Brot. Gott gebe eine baldige Veränderung dieser Szenen!'

worried about his personal future well-being.<sup>476</sup> Historical accounts have later estimated French casualties at the Beresina to about 20-30,000 combatants and as many as 30,000 non-combatants while, the Russians lost about 10,000.<sup>477</sup>

The Prussian auxiliary corps attached to Marshal Macdonald's 10. Corps had during the autumn conducted a siege of Riga. The corps counted about 14,000 soldiers under the immediate command of Lieutenant-general von York, an experienced and ambitious soldier who also despised French preponderance but stayed loyal to the king.<sup>478</sup> He had not been in the inner circle of Scharnhorst's reformers even though he had contributed extensively to tactical development during the reform. During the siege he had some discreet contacts with the Russians. The turn of the tide made the contact closer.<sup>479</sup> A sign came when Napoleon handed over the immediate theatre command to Marshal Murat at the beginning of December, to head back for Paris by himself.

At the same time Clausewitz apparently established a relationship of trust with Wittgenstein. During the retreat York's corps was several day-marches behind Macdonald. The Russian advance guard was commanded by Major-general Diebitsch, a Prussian officer who had long been in Russian service. The interest in fighting turned out to be limited and negotiations began. Clausewitz was appointed Russian representative along with his friend *Graf Dohna*, Scharnhorst's son-in-law.

The negotiations started on Christmas Day and continued towards the New Year. One of York's adjutants returned from Berlin on 29 December. He informed York of the king's inflexible policy towards France; the support should continue despite the French retreat and losses. The same day, Clausewitz brought information from Wittgenstein to York in his headquarters situated in the small town of Tauroggen. The letters outlined considerable Russian reinforcement in two days' time, which would pose a real threat to the Prussian auxiliary corps. The whole took the form of 'ultima ratio' in Clausewitz's later words. York faced a delicate political-military dilemma; either to obey royal policy, doubtful or not, or to use his judgement in the situation to save his troops for better use in the future. Clausewitz later compared the episode with a drama by Schiller.

General York: 'Clausewitz you are a Prussian, do you sincerely believe the letter of General d'Auvray [Chief of GS to Wittgenstein] is truthful and Wittgenstein's forces really will be in place on the 31? Could you give me your word of honour?' The author [Clausewitz] replied: 'Your Highness I cannot guarantee the honesty of the letter based on what I know about General d'Auvray and the rest of the men in Wittgenstein's headquarters;

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<sup>476</sup> Clausewitz to Freiherr v. Stein, Borrisow 18/30 November 1812, published and edited by Max Lehmann as 'Clausewitz über die Schlacht an der Beresina', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Heft 2 (1889), 110-12

<sup>477</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 846

<sup>478</sup> See Clausewitz character description in *Schriften* (1990), 869-97

<sup>479</sup> See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 228-30



neither can I guarantee the dispositions to be executed exactly, because as Your Highness knows, in war even with the best will in the world one often ends up short of the line one has drawn up for oneself.' [cf. friction] The General pondered the situation for a moment in silence, then he held out his hand and said – 'You have me...'<sup>480</sup>

The actual Convention of Tauroggen, most likely written by Clausewitz himself, was signed on the following day.<sup>481</sup> In seven articles the Prussian auxiliary corps was declared neutral with the possibility to deploy in a neutral zone. York violated the king's policy, an act that could change Europe politically according to the account of his adjutant in the corps' war diary.<sup>482</sup> Clausewitz did in fact later use the case to discuss the problem of determining cause and effect in a strategic sense.<sup>483</sup>

In the middle of January the king issued an order to relieve York of his command and open an inquiry of misconduct, but York managed to stay in command shielded by the Russian advance and the French retreat in Eastern Prussia. Clausewitz told Marie about the great feeling of being in Prussian headquarters again and the prospect of soon reaching Königsberg in Eastern Prussia.<sup>484</sup> The first Cossacks entered this city on 5 January. *Freiherr* v. Stein had been in Russia during 1812 and was appointed political envoy to the tsar for the liberated areas. He arrived in Königsberg 22 January with a Russian mandate to raise local forces for protection.

### RUSSIAN LIAISON IN PRUSSIA'S HQ, SPRING CAMPAIGN 1813

The province of Eastern Prussia expressed support for York's decision and condemned French dominance contrary to official policy, fuelled by public enthusiasm. The local government guided by Stein decided to recruit a *Landwehr* of 20,000 soldiers to support York's corps. In addition to organize a *Landsturm* to be able to locally fight an intruder. The former was organized as regular military units while the latter was a simpler organisation to offer resistance in all areas, especially non-defended behind and between main units.<sup>485</sup> *Volksbewaffnung*, i.e. arming of the people, had been proposed several times before; by Scharnhorst before Jena and later by the reformers in their plans for uprisings. This had been and was however a highly sensitive political question opposed by the king and Prussian parties loyal to French power and the old order.

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<sup>480</sup> Clausewitz [spring to December 1824], Chapter 3 'Verlauf des Feldzugs' of 'Feldzug von 1812 in Russland', *Schriften* (1990), 905

<sup>481</sup> According to Paret (*Clausewitz and the State*, 230 n. 21) the actual convention was probably written by Clausewitz's hand. The document was reprinted in Generalmajor Seidlitz, *Tagebuch des Königlich Preußischen Armeekorps unter Befehl des General-Lieutenantes von York*, Vol2/2 (Berlin: Mittler, 1823), 247-49

<sup>482</sup> Seidlitz, *Tagebuch des Königlich Preußischen Armeekorps*, Vol2/2, 249

<sup>483</sup> See Clausewitz [1823 – March 1825], Chapter 3 'Verlauf des Feldzugs' of 'Feldzug von 1812 in Russland', *Schriften* (1990), 914.

<sup>484</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Tauroggen 18/30 December 1812, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 305-06

<sup>485</sup> See Caemmerer, *Clausewitz*, 40-44

The armament of the people was now carried out as province policy, authorized by Stein's Russian mandate. This decision was taken by a local political commission on 6-9 February 1813. To support the commission's meeting Clausewitz had written a short text on the most important factors to consider for the organisation of a *Landsturm* and its militia.<sup>486</sup> It was based on the proposals he had put forward in the three *Bekanntnissen* in February 1812. Clausewitz probably drafted the commission's decision that gained legal force.<sup>487</sup> On 11 February the Königsberg newspaper published information about the decision to form a *Landwehr* and an order for officers on half-pay in the province to report to Clausewitz for duty.<sup>488</sup> The king received meanwhile demands from all around the country to start a war of liberation, and left Potsdam for Breslau in Silesia on 22 January.

Scharnhorst, along with the key reformers and the advocates for war such as Gneisenau, Grolman, Boyen and Blücher, assembled around the king in Breslau. Double-dealing now took place, on one hand to uphold the formal alliance with France and on the other to prepare for war. On 23 February Scharnhorst convinced Friedrich Wilhelm about a new foreign policy. Stein arrived in Breslau two days later with a proposal from the tsar to form a coalition. The dynamic situation in Breslau was described by the Austrian envoy on the spot, which depicted 'patriotism as *Politik*' quite frankly: 'The *Geistes* are in fermentation, in a manner difficult to describe. General Scharnhorst exercises unlimited influence. The military and chiefs of the sects have under the mask of patriotism taken complete control of the government; the *Kanzler* is torn away by the stream.'<sup>489</sup> The coalition was ratified politically by Hardenberg as early as 27 February and the military aspect was negotiated by Scharnhorst the following day with his Russian counterpart Field-Marshal Kutuzov.

French forces evacuated Berlin in early March and left the city open. Wittengenstein's corps entered Berlin on 7 March 1813 and ten days later York's corps marched through the city among euphoric people. Clausewitz returned to Berlin with York's corps. He stayed with Marie and her mother for two weeks before going to Scharnhorst in Silesia.<sup>490</sup> Tsar Alexander arrived in Breslau on 15 March and Friedrich Wilhelm issued

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<sup>486</sup> Clausewitz [Before 6 February 1813], 'Das wesentlichste in der Organisation eines Landsturmes und seiner Miliz', *Schriften* (1979), 177-84. Also published in *Militärischen Wochenblatt*, Beiheft 1-3 (Jg.1846); Max Lehmann, *Knesebeck und Schön – Beiträge zur Geschichte der Freiheitskriege* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1875), 218-21. For the date see also Caemmerer *Clausewitz*, 40-44; Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 2-4

<sup>487</sup> Clausewitz et.al [9 February 1813], 'Festsetzung betreffend die Landwehr in den Provinzen Litauen, Ostpreußen und Westpreußen auf dem rechten Weichselufer', printed in Lehmann, *Knesebeck und Schön*, 218-21. Lehman argued that Graf Dohna had copied Clausewitz's essay without referring to him.

<sup>488</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 231

<sup>489</sup> Cited in Lehmann, *Scharnhorst*, 514. 'Die Geister sind in einer Gärung, die schwer zu beschreiben ist. General Scharnhorst übt unbegrenzten Einfluß. Die Militärs und die haupter der Secten haben unter der Maske des Patriotismus der Zügel der Regierung vollständig bemächtigt, der Kanzler wird vom Strome fortgerissen.'

<sup>490</sup> See Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 11-12; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 232

two proclamations to his people and army. 'An mein Volk' and 'An mein Kriegsheer' notified everyone that a new law of mandatory service in the *Landwehr* for all men between 17 and 40 had been issued, thus according to Scharnhorst's military ideas to create a numerically stronger and more motivated army.

This was followed by a formal declaration of war on France ten days later. The case of treason against York was dropped thanks to Scharnhorst's influence, but Clausewitz was not so lucky. The Berlin *Kammergericht* renewed its demands on him on 3 March, and his request to re-enter Prussian service was turned down by the king. 'In consequence of your letter of the 11 [March], I have decided to stop your process. You can only be re-accepted for service to the Fatherland if you have earned the right to special consideration by particularly distinguishing yourself in the coming campaign.'<sup>491</sup>

'I have never announced your great value', Scharnhorst told Clausewitz, 'I have not until recently, being very busy, realized the right feeling. Only with you do I understand myself, only our ideas unite or go in harmony without changing direction.'<sup>492</sup> The ageing General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742-1819) was given command of the Prussian main corps, which he concentrated in the area of Breslau. Scharnhorst had suggested Blücher's promotion and was appointed his chief of staff with Gneisenau as *Generalquartiermeister*. The Russians helped Clausewitz and made him liaison officer to Blücher's staff with his own French-speaking adjutant.<sup>493</sup> The arrangement enabled him to work as a Prussian officer closely to Scharnhorst, in spite of being in Russian service. Scharnhorst appealed to the king to accept his pupil's re-employment, but never received a clear response in this case.<sup>494</sup>

Prussian forces defeated a French corps at Lüneburg on 2 April in the first combat against Napoleon's newly-drafted army. The combat was not decisive, as Clausewitz actually had estimated the day before to his wife. The first victory was of minor strategic importance but had great moral effect on fighting spirit and public opinion. Marie was told of the great spirit of the new Prussian Army and his joy at being part of the force of liberation, close to his friends:

That I am well and live the happiest days of my life is now the most important thing I can tell you. My dear, dear little Army, which my friends head, and advance through beautiful country for such a purpose, in the most beautiful season, is so near the ideal of a mortal existence (thus as temporary and thought of as a transition to another existence). My friend G[neisenau] appears like a God in his general's uniform. The troops are cheerful and sing: 'Auf, auf Kameraden!' and similar songs, others yodel to perfection.'<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm III to Clausewitz, 19 March 1813, cited and translated in Paret, *York*, 172

<sup>492</sup> Scharnhorst to Clausewitz, Breslau 21 March 1813, Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 12-13

<sup>493</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Kalisch 26 March 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 320-22

<sup>494</sup> See Clausewitz to Marie, Dresden, 1 April 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 322-24

<sup>495</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Penig 4 April 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 324-25. 'Daß ich wohl bin und glücklichliche Tage verlebe, ist jetzt die hauptsache von dem, was ich Dir zu

Clausewitz appreciated communicating in German again and being able to use his faculties at his best. He was also very happy about the trust Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Blücher showed him by allowing him extensive influence on the staff work. The royal family treated him with utter coldness however, except for Prince August and Prince Wilhelm.<sup>496</sup> The king was unforgiving towards those who had left his service and disobeyed his policy.

Grolman had left Prussia in April 1810 to fight French power in Spain, which he had regarded as a possible starting point for European liberation. He had fought with great distinction but was nevertheless degraded upon his return to active duty 1813, which indicated Clausewitz's fate.<sup>497</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm viewed cases of subtle disobedience as deviation from personal loyalty to him. After their reunion in March it was finally apparent that Marie could not become pregnant, for which Clausewitz felt great sorrow as he awaited combat in Altenburg south of Leipzig in late April 1813.<sup>498</sup>

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau wanted to push hard west of the Elbe to exploit Bonaparte's temporary weakness caused by the loss of battle-proven forces in Russia. But Commander-in-Chief Kutuzov was dying and the allied command was hampered until Wittgenstein was allowed to succeed. The Russian operational plan was much more cautious. Napoleon seized the initiative and switched to the offensive in late April, his operational aim was Leipzig. The allies had to act, but lost the battle of Gross Görschen (or Lützen) on 2 May. Napoleon, however, failed to pursue and further utilize the situation. The Allies inflicted a great proportion of casualties on the French, but got also many casualties of their own.

Friedrich Wilhelm lost his nerve during the night, threatened by the consequences of retreat. 'This is like Auerstedt', he shouted.<sup>499</sup> Clausewitz wrote to Marie the next day; 'I am quite all right, even though a small Frenchman cut me behind the right ear with his bayonet.'<sup>500</sup> Blücher had a minor wound and Scharnhorst had been shot in the leg, apparently nothing serious. The situation required that the reluctant Austrians join the coalition. Friedrich Wilhelm visited Scharnhorst the next morning. The wounded

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berichten habe. Mit einer allerliebsten kleinen Armee, an deren Spitze meine Freunde stehen, durch ein herrliches Land zu ziehen für einen solchen Zweck, in der schönen Jahreszeit, ist so ziemlich das Ideal einer iridischen Existenz (nämlich als vorübergehend und zu anderen Existenzen führend gedacht). Mein Freund G [neisenau] representiert wie ein Gott in seiner Generalsuniform. Die Truppen sind heiter und singen: 'Auf, auf Kameraden!' und ähnliche Lieder, anderer jodeln in der Perfektion.'

<sup>496</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Rochlitz bei Leipzig 9 April 1813; Clausewitz to Marie, Altenburg 18 April 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 325-28

<sup>497</sup> Heinz Kraft, 'Grolman, Karl Wilhelm Georg', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 7 (1966), 123-25. [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119061376.html> accessed 14 June 2012

<sup>498</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Altenburg 25 April 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 329-31; See also Schramm, *Clausewitz*, 452

<sup>499</sup> Cited in Hornung, *Scharnhorst*, 279

<sup>500</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, 3 May 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 331-32

general persuaded the dejected king to continue the war and send him on a political mission to Vienna to persuade the Austrians to take part in a grand coalition against Napoleon. Scharnhorst met Gneisenau shortly later in the morning before he left, which turned out to be their last meeting.

Later in May, Gneisenau and Clausewitz wrote a memorandum on the strategic situation in the absence of Scharnhorst. This estimated the defence of Silesia to supplement Blücher's command report to the King.<sup>501</sup> In a farmer's house during the night of 14-15 May the two friends conducted a deeper strategic estimate with the political presence of Hardenberg's trustee. They decided to fight a larger battle soon despite being outnumbered, for the simple purpose of showing political-military vigour to influence the hesitating Austrians to join forces.<sup>502</sup> This illustrated once more the intimate practical relation of political authority and military high command.

The Prussian-Russian army was concentrating around Bautzen when it was detected by French reconnaissance on 16 May. In May Napoleon tried with one hand to settle peace with the Russians and with the other to achieve a major victory. His army was numerically superior but inexperienced. The fierce combat of Bautzen vacillated back and forth during 20-21 May. It might have been a perfect Napoleonic annihilation battle if Marshal Ney had listened to his chief of staff Jomini. Ney's blunder left the natural way of retreat open so allied forces could retreat in good order, leaving about 20,000 casualties on both sides. The allies quarrelled about the continuation and Wittgenstein resigned in protest at the tsar's military interference, which had spoiled the battle.<sup>503</sup>

Clausewitz sent Scharnhorst a summary of the situation after Bautzen in late May, in addition praying for his recovery since he knew that his friend's wound had become infected.<sup>504</sup> Marie was meanwhile very worried about the future and intended to leave Berlin with her mother. She was afraid their well-known anti-French posture would be unsafe in case of a new occupation. Clausewitz, however, regarded the strategic situation as not so bad, and it unfolded quite like he had anticipated. He observed that the French were in a much more difficult situation than the allies. Desertion was a major problem for Bonaparte and he also faced the risk of Austrian intervention. This forced him to employ several outposts in that direction, tying up a whole army corps as reserve. Clausewitz desired a new major battle and tried to calm his unhappy wife: 'Emperor Napoleon has never played such a desperate game.'<sup>505</sup> Both sides were in fact short of forces and a cease-fire was agreed upon a couple of days later, to take effect between 4 June and 4 August.

Gneisenau was appointed Governor General of Silesia and commander of the regional *Landwehr*. He asked for permission to employ Clausewitz, which the king immediately

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<sup>501</sup> [Clausewitz], Gneisenau's Bericht an den König 12 Mai 1813, *Schriften* (1979), 187-90. Also in Pertz, Gneisenau, vol 3/5 (1869), 679-81

<sup>502</sup> Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 2/5 (1864), 615; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 238

<sup>503</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 889-98

<sup>504</sup> Clausewitz to Scharnhorst, Strigau 28 May 1813, *Schriften* (1979), 201-3. Also published by F. Wagner 'Briefe an Scharnhorst', *Historische Zeitschrift* Vol 127 (1923), 254-56

<sup>505</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Schweidnitz 31 May 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 337-39

refused.<sup>506</sup> Clausewitz stayed on Blücher's staff. In the reformer's new military organisation the *Landsturm* was the politically most controversial part. Every man between fifteen and sixty, not recruited to the regular *Landwehr*, had an obligation to serve in this force based on *levée en masse*. Gneisenau had a real political quarrel with one Scharnweber, a councillor on Hardenberg's political staff, about the *Landwehr* and exemptions from service. Scharnweber got furious and challenged Gneisenau to a duel, which he refused with the king's permission. Clausewitz was called in by both sides, so he wrote an explanation of the *Landsturm* and its consequences.<sup>507</sup>

Scharnhorst never recovered, and died in Prague 28 June. Gneisenau and Clausewitz wrote the following days an obituary and a necrology stating; 'He was one of the most excellent men of our time.'<sup>508</sup> Gneisenau passed the texts to the cabinet for political approval before publication in Berlin and Breslau newspapers. However, some members of the cabinet objected because the text suggested that Scharnhorst's great achievement for Prussia was not fully recognized. This was seen as a subtle political criticism: not acceptable. Gneisenau finally persuaded Hardenberg to ignore the criticism and approve the original text, which was published in several papers between 12 and 14 July. Clausewitz wrote in 1817 a text in memory of Scharnhorst with the same tone.

Heinrich von Begeulin worked at the Silesia headquarters on financial questions. He had previously worked with Stein and the reform, handling the Prussian war reparations to France. He and his wife Amalie were friends of Gneisenau. She wrote in her diary about a tea-party with a 'strange bunch of people' in the evening of 7 July 1813; these were Grolman, Gneisenau, Clausewitz, Sebel, Humbolt and Scharnweber (Gneisenau's duellist). Gneisenau was known for his hot temper, but the evening continued calmly and no duel took place. Amalie's notes cast some light on the individuals. 'Clausewitz has a decisive influence on him [Gneisenau] and seems to me to be the chief of the party, ambitious and clever. It seemed to me that he [Clausewitz] also aims at personal success, which he covers under the mantle of public interest however. Grolman is the most relaxed [or nicest] of the three.'<sup>509</sup> She further noted Gneisenau's own standpoint, pronounced once; 'Clausewitz is a man whose advice I highly rate and whose talent I rate superior to my own...'<sup>510</sup>

Clausewitz wrote on behalf of Gneisenau, in just a couple of days, an account of the spring campaign at the beginning of the armistice. This text had a clear propaganda, purpose, to justify the war and raise political enthusiasm for a continuation of the

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<sup>506</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Reichenbach 10/11 June 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 340-41

<sup>507</sup> Clausewitz [Mid- or late-r June 1813], 'Die Erklärung des Oberst-Lieutenants von Clausewitz', *Schriften* (1979), 190-92. First in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 3/5, 688-89

<sup>508</sup> Gneisenau [and Clausewitz] [29-30 June 1813], 'Nachruf / Nekrolog Scharnhorst', published in Pertz, *Gneisenau*, vol3/5, 32-37, cf. 32

<sup>509</sup> Amalie Beguelin, diary entry Peilau 8 July 1813, in *Denkwürdigkeiten von Heinrich und Amalie von Begulin aus den Jahren 1807-1813 mit Briefen von Gneisenau und Hardenberg*, Hg. Adolf Ernst (Berlin: Springer, 1892), 274-75

<sup>510</sup> Cited in Beguelin, *Denkwürdigkeiten von Heinrich und Amalie von Begulin*, 285

fighting after the armistice.<sup>511</sup> It was published in late August-September 1813.<sup>512</sup> In a concurrent letter to Gneisenau, Clausewitz elaborated a standpoint to promote the defence of Silesia contrary to the ruling view of evacuation, which indicated his influence on actual strategy-making, despite his green coat.<sup>513</sup> This time was repeatedly described as very happy for him; since he could do his practical best for the purpose he desired most – freedom by destroying Napoleonic power.

## ON THE FLANK WITH THE RUSSO-GERMAN LEGION

Clausewitz realized early in the summer of 1813 that the king had kept his malicious posture towards him. The new Iron Cross was not allowed for people in a foreign army, he was told. The king even stopped a Russian decoration for bravery to diminish every form of official gratitude that could be an excuse for re-employment. Clausewitz realized now that he sooner or later had to leave Gneisenau, and felt sorrow.<sup>514</sup> At the end of June he was gazetted *erster Generalstabsofficier*, first general staff officer, in the Russo-German Legion reorganized under the command of Ludwig Graf von Wallmoden-Gimborn (1769-1862).<sup>515</sup>

Before he left he wrote several short memorandums for Gneisenau. The first outlined how Captain Boltens Stern's unit could conduct a partisan war (*Parteigängerkrieg*) for the defence of Silesia.<sup>516</sup> A related piece estimated the prospect of dispersed mountain war, how the mountains of Silesia could be utilized as base for a partisan war against the rear and flanks of a French offensive operation into the region.<sup>517</sup>

The Russians officially announced Clausewitz's transfer to the Russo-German Legion on 3 July and Gneisenau tried once more, in vain, to have him re-accepted for Prussian service. Marie and her mother had escaped Berlin and stayed in Liebau during the armistice. They were advised by Clausewitz to head for Prague if the hostilities continued.<sup>518</sup> Finally in the middle of July he left Blücher's headquarters heading for Grabow in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The Stein family acted this time as the

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<sup>511</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz] [June 1813], *Der Feldzug von 1813 bis zum Waffenstillstand* (Glatz: Pompejus, 1813). A second and a third edition printed in Leipzig, 1813. A slightly modified version (according to Partet) is printed in *Werke* vol 7/10 (1835), 249-316. Compare also the account of Friedrich Karl Ferdinand Müffling, *Die Preussisch-russische Campagne im Jahr 1813, von der Eröffnung, bis zum Waffenstillstande vom 5ten Juni 1813; mit dem plan der Schlacht von Groß-Görschen, der Schlacht von Bautzen und dem Gefecht von Hannau* (Breslau: Kayser, 14 June 1813)

<sup>512</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Hauptquartier Schwerin 4 September 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 350-51

<sup>513</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Ruppertsdorf, 7 Juni 1813 evening, *Schriften* (1990), 144-46

<sup>514</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Gimschitz bei Bautzen 18 May 1813; *Ibid.*, Bei Schweidnitz 28 May 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 334-37

<sup>515</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Peilau 31 June 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 341-43

<sup>516</sup> Clausewitz [Early July 1813], 'Über den Parteigängerkrieg des Majors v. Boltens Stern.', *Schriften* (1979), 192-196. Also in Pertz, *Gneisenau*, Vol 3/5, 689-92; Clausewitz [Early July 1813], 'Ueber die ausführung des Landsturms im Gebirge', *Schriften* (1990), 159-60

<sup>517</sup> Gneisenau [Clausewitz] to the King, Glatz 20 July 1813, 'An Seine Majestät den König', *Schriften* (1979), 196-98. Also in Pertz, *Gneisenau*, Vol 3/5, 692-93

<sup>518</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Reichenbach 10 June 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 340

Clausewitz family's mail-service, which illustrates his close relation to the former *Kanzler*. Marie was instructed to be in Nachod (Czech *Náchod*) on 18 July, so they could see each other before he left Silesia. It worked well and they spent a couple of days together in Reinerz, a spa town in lower Silesia.<sup>519</sup>

Clausewitz arrived in Berlin on 1 August and stayed for a couple days to see what was going on. The capital was, however, empty of his acquaintances except for Boyen who was awaiting a new command. Gneisenau was told: 'All the heroes of the North are dispersed in Mecklenburg...'<sup>520</sup> The emptiness was due to the inspection of units to establish the Allied Northern Army, an inspection carried out by the appointed Commander, the Swedish Crown Prince Jean Bernadotte (1763-1844). The Northern Army comprised Swedish, Prussian and Russian forces, of which the Russo-German Legion was part. Bernadotte, a former Marshal to Napoleon, had been offered the Swedish throne in 1810. Sweden had joined the Russo-Prussian alliance in April 1812 for the purpose of obtaining Norway as a substitute for the loss of Finland to Russia in 1809.

Grabow in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was the Legion's area of deployment and Clausewitz's destination when he left Berlin on 5 August. Wallmoden was away on commander's conference in Stralsund when Clausewitz arrived a couple of days later. Wallmoden was an Austrian cavalry general and had recently entered Russian service. Clausewitz only knew Wallmoden by reputation and hesitated about what their relation would be. After a couple of talks, however, things turned out well. Marie was told he had been appointed '*Generalquartiersmeister der Armee des Grafen Wallmoden*'.<sup>521</sup> To his dissatisfaction the corps was employed as an observation army on the flank against Marshal Davout's 13 Corps, which defended the area of Hamburg.

'The war has started.' Clausewitz told Marie on 18 August. 'Marshal Davout with some 30,000 Danes and Frenchmen is about to advance. It is impossible to forecast the unfolding of events, when everything depends on the enemy making a crack somewhere.'<sup>522</sup> Clausewitz later theorized strategy by adopting uncertainty as a typical feature of the 'atmosphere of war', a condition theory had to accept and conform to. It is also possible he had the overall allied strategy in mind, the so-called Trachenberg Plan. An army attacked by Napoleon should disengage, while the other armies should close in on French lines of communication and in a gradual process weaken French forces. The strategy was to avoid direct encounters with the emperor in person to circumvent his genius for battle and instead confront his less-able subordinates.<sup>523</sup>

Wallmoden's calmness and bravery in the midst of the small combats performed by the corps in late August impressed Clausewitz. The two got along well but he was once

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<sup>519</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Reichenbach 6/10/12 July 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 340-44

<sup>520</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 4 August 1813, *Schriften* (1990), 148-50

<sup>521</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Grabow 12/14/15 August 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 344-46

<sup>522</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Wittenburg 18 August 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 346

<sup>523</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 901; Barthold v. Quitorp, *Geschichte der Nordarmee im Jahre 1813*, Vol 1/2 (Berlin: Mittler, 1894), 60-76



more tormented by gout, a frequent health problem. At the same time he perceived Napoleon as less masterly than previously, which evoked hope.<sup>524</sup> The lack of larger combats made him uneasy, since it smacked of indecisiveness and weakness. Clausewitz experienced here a situation of standstill and equilibrium in the middle of the warlike act. Later in 1817 he would use problems of standstill and progress in the warlike act to problematize strategy:

We have not yet had one single proper combat, and we avoid this on purpose, since we have found the means to bring the enemy to a standstill or at least to attach a lump of lead to his plans without any [combats]. The correlation of forces and other circumstances make this our duty, and if anybody should label us passive and indecisive, by referring to the character of Graf Wallmoden, then you [Marie] should think of this person as an incompetent arbiter.<sup>525</sup>

Meanwhile the main forces fought the battle of Dresden on 26-27 August, where the allies had to disengage and leave some 38,000 casualties behind in comparison to the French losses of less than 10,000. French strategic success was however destroyed by Marshal Macdonald, who apparently disobeyed Napoleon and pursued Blücher's Army over the Katzbach on 26 August where his columns got separated. Blücher and Gneisenau saw this opportunity and caught their enemy by wheeling their forces around. The French rapidly lost 15,000 soldiers and 100 cannons.<sup>526</sup> An 'overjoyed' Gneisenau told Clausewitz two days later about the first true Prussian victory, which finally displayed the fruits of reform and tactical development. 'We won the day before yesterday a beautiful battle, decisively, in a way the French have never lost before.'<sup>527</sup>

At the same time Wallmoden's corps manoeuvred back and forth on the northern flank, but also carried out a small offensive enterprise. A pontoon-bridge was built across the Elbe at Dömitz and the river was crossed during the night of 13 September. Clausewitz also went over and in the next two days took part in combat against General Pecheur's division deployed around Göhrde. The attacker managed to divide the French division and inflict 2000 casualties as well as capturing 1500 soldiers along with four cannons.<sup>528</sup> So much success was enough for prompt promotion according to the Russian yardstick, in Clausewitz's opinion. 'To become colonel is a great object of

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<sup>524</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Grabow 27 August 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 347-48

<sup>525</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Wöbbelin bei Neustadt 1 September 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 348-50

<sup>526</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 903-12

<sup>527</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Goldberg 28 August 1813, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol3/5, 223-227

<sup>528</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Dannenberg, 19 September 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 353-55

my ambition...' Marie was told.<sup>529</sup> This time he was lucky and was actually promoted colonel in the Russian army already in the next day, 22 September 1813.

The small victory at Göhrde apparently induced Bernadotte to order a more ambitious attack in late September, deeper into enemy territory. Wallmoden's corps was ordered to attack Davost's numerically superior force far behind the Stenknitz canal. This enterprise Clausewitz regarded both as dangerous and a waste of effort outside what was to be considered as strategically important. He estimated that the whole county of Mecklenburg would have to be evacuated if the operation failed.

To Gneisenau he criticized Bernadotte's political egoism in the middle of conducting operations: 'But it is a political fixed idea [*politische Marotte*] of the crown prince that we should defeat the Danes. I must confess to you that it is very difficult to put the well-being and existence of the corps, as well as our reputation, at risk for nothing, and pity us Sir, when you hear that we are victims of rashness and waywardness.'<sup>530</sup>

The great decisive event of the autumn campaign took place at Leipzig 16-19 October. Had it not been for Blücher's and Gneisenau's eagerness to fight Napoleon, the allied commanders may well have avoided the *Völkerschlacht*, the Great Battle of the Nations. Napoleon had no intention to fight a decisive battle but Leipzig became the largest battle fought in European history prior to World War One. The allies lost around 54,000 while French casualties were 38,000 and a further 30,000 were taken prisoner. The allied victory meant an end to French power east of the Rhine. The German small states left the confederation with France. Prussia rose anew as the leading German power.<sup>531</sup> Prussian forces had played a major role in the victory. Clausewitz told Gneisenau in joy, 'The world is drunk with your glory', but he also worried about the next allied strategic course of action.

As difficult operations may under these circumstances be on the other side of the Rhine, I am equally truly convinced that the defensive is stronger than the offensive under similar conditions, so I hold the position that it is completely decisive, to cross the Rhine and carry on operations without any halt until peace is reached, even if this leads to Paris...I have no doubt that you [Gneisenau] share my view and I write this only to possibly further reinforce you in this view. I can imagine the *pseudo truth*, which will be used at a hundred single points to combat this idea. To disprove these points one needs to write a book but this, to recognize the falsity of the whole reasoning, does not belong to the tact of judgement [*Takt des Urteils*], in addition [it is not done] in the twinkling of an eye, as one borrow from time and circumstances [cf. the Enlightenment] that are quite dissimilar to the present one.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Dömitz 21 September 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 356-57

<sup>530</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Dömitz 30 September 1813, *Schriften* (1990), 150-52

<sup>531</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 912-36

<sup>532</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Dömitz 1 November 1813, *Schriften* (1990), 153-55, cf 153-54. 'So schwierig die Operationen jenseit des Rheins unter andern Umständen sind, so fest ich überzeugt bin, daß man bei übrigens gleichen Umständen in der Defensive stärker ist als in der Offensive, so halte Ich es doch für ganz entscheiden, daß man über den Rhein gehen müsse und

In his opinion Bonaparte's army was almost annihilated and unable to do anything against a firm conclusive attack. He anticipated, however, that the allied command would halt operations at the Rhine. To do so (*Stillstand der Operationen*) in this situation would be a serious strategic blunder that would invite Bonaparte to raise a new army during the winter. *Vom Kriege* can in this sense be seen as the book that tried to expel the ruling 'pseudo truth' of allied strategic reasoning rooted in the Enlightenment. Some years later Clausewitz was going to codify the 'warlike element' as a theoretical weapon to disprove the strategic thought of the Enlightenment, which will be elaborated in the following chapters.

Gneisenau confirmed Clausewitz's worries two weeks later. The predominant standpoint was to stop operations at the Rhine as the natural frontier between France and Germany. Gneisenau pinpointed especially one advocate by labelling him '*der Lange Mann*'. The tall man was Karl Friedrich von der Kneesebeck (1768-1848), the king's *Generaladjutant* and strategic adviser since March 1813.<sup>533</sup> Kneesebeck had signed the Trachenberg strategy on behalf of Prussia and regarded continuing operations over the Rhine as sheer stupidity. Gneisenau cited some objections to ironically confirm Clausewitz's correct estimate and worries: 'This has never been the intention before, why has someone come up with this crazy idea now? The Rhine is a sector where one has to stop and first rebuild oneself, to deny enemy crossing... Well, we do not want to accept the ridiculous idea to go Paris, do we?'<sup>534</sup>

At the same time Napoleon managed to save about 70,000 combatants and 40,000 stragglers over the Rhine, but his losses in 1813 were an almost unbelievable 400,000. However, he planned to do exactly as Clausewitz predicted; to raise a new army of more than 900,000 conscripts and reserves during the winter to restore his power and freedom of action.<sup>535</sup> In Clausewitz's later analysis Napoleon was well aware that his political position as a usurper and a son of fortune relied on the fear of others if he was to stay in power: he could not afford to lose as a monarch borne to rule could.

Gneisenau and Clausewitz started to suspect at this time they were put under surveillance by the secret police, since their correspondence took longer and

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die Operationen ohne Rast, bis zum Frieden fortsetzen gesetzt auch sie führten bis Paris... Ich zweifle nicht, daß Sie meiner Ansicht sind und schreibe dies nur um Sie wo möglich daran noch zu bestärken. Ich kann mir die Scheinwahrheit denken, mit welcher man in hundert einzelnen Punkten diese Idee bekämpfen wird. Sie zu widerlegen müßte man ein Buch schreiben, aber es gehört nichts als Takt des Urtheils dazu um in einen Augenblick das Falche des ganzen Raisonements zu erkennen, was man uns Zeiten und Verhältnissen entlehnt, die den jetzigen ganz unähnlich sind.' (my emphasis)

<sup>533</sup> Ferdinand v. Meersheimb, 'Kneesebeck, Karl Friedrich' *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Vol 16 (1882), 281-84 [Online version] URL: <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00008374/images/index.html> accessed 29 August 2011

<sup>534</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Frankfurt 16 November 1813, Pertz, *Gneisenau*, Vol 3/5, 557-60. See also Clausewitz to Marie, Dammerow 16 November 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 357

<sup>535</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 938-46

disappeared sometimes. The reformers' political views were not shared by everyone. Conservative powers feared that their political views and their action were sometimes too independent. Gneisenau was not labelled 'Prussia's Napoleon' without reason; strong, determined and eager to do everything for the cause - 'the personification of the good cause' as Marie described him. This brought him enemies and the secret police were acting on instructions from conservative powers. Investigations and surveillance would in fact haunt Gneisenau for many years after the war.

Wallmoden's corps finally fought against the Danes in December, all according to the political will of Bernadotte. The main Danish forces retreated to a position around Lübeck, which made them an easy target. The allied advance, however, stopped for three days at Rendsburg to engage a minor Danish force. This decision gave the main force time to retreat and just a minor victory was achieved. The Crown Prince was very satisfied, though, while Clausewitz regarded the engagement merely as a false substitute for true victory. The Danes entered negotiations to shift sides, but Clausewitz was afraid Bernadotte's political egoism would ruin this.<sup>536</sup> The situation in a way illuminates Clausewitz's standpoint: annihilate the strength underpinning political being and action rather than a minor force less strategically important for the future. Here somewhat simplified lies the notion of *Schwerpunkt* in strategic terms.

The Allied command decided finally after a long debate in Frankfurt-am-Main to launch a winter campaign to put more pressure on Napoleon. Blücher's Silesian army started to cross the Rhine on 29 December aiming for Antwerp and northern France to exploit the desire for a public uprising present in the Low Countries. Schwarzenberg's army would head for the Langres Plateau. Bernadotte's army was to continue to isolate Marshal Davost's forces around Hamburg and put pressure on the Danes.<sup>537</sup>

Clausewitz was somewhat disappointed not to be in the thick of the main effort. He had been worried about his future service, as the Legion was paid for by Britain and now under review. Wallmoden's main alternative had been to get the Legion into Austrian service. Clausewitz had via Gneisenau tried to arrange for a transfer to Prussian service, which was refused by the king. The tsar promised, however, to keep the Legion as long as the war continued. Clausewitz observed that Schwarzenberg was as commander dominated by pusillanimity that made the Austrian enterprise slow, while Blücher and Gneisenau filled the allied effort with energy.<sup>538</sup>

In January 1814 Napoleon faced major problems, with few forces and fading public support. As field commander he proved his best however, winning a couple of minor victories and putting the allies under hard pressure in late February. The Silesian army was reinforced and set to operate independently, which terminated in the battle of Laon on 7-10 March. Blücher became exhausted in the middle of the fighting and

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<sup>536</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Gr. Schirrensee bei Rendsburg 14 December 1813, *Schriften* (1990), 156-58; See also Clausewitz to Marie, Gr. Schirrensee 13 December 1813, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 358-61

<sup>537</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 946-49

<sup>538</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Münster 6 March and Düsseldorf 15 March 1814, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 362-64

Gneisenau was unable to conclude the initial plan that could have caused a major French defeat.

Clausewitz experienced the political quarrel in the allied command. The Emperor of Austria had no interest in toppling Napoleon, his son-in-law. Bernadotte was furious and threatened to leave the coalition because forces had been taken from him. In addition he had probably the ambition to succeed Bonaparte on the French throne. A crack in the coalition could in Clausewitz's opinion have a major impact on public support for Napoleon and against the allies.<sup>539</sup>

Wallmoden's corps advanced in March through the Netherlands towards Brussels. Clausewitz had for a while thought to enter Dutch service, but dropped this idea. The corps was forced to cover Brussels with just a few forces, while General Maison's forces retreated. The situation could have been 'unpleasant' if the French had turned round and forced a battle upon Wallmoden's inferior corps. Defeat would in that case have been certain, in Clausewitz's opinion.<sup>540</sup> At the end of March, allied forces reached Paris, occupying the city with just minor fighting, news Clausewitz received on 4 April. Two days later Napoleon was allowed to abdicate on conditions far too generous in Clausewitz's opinion because his power of influence was not broken.<sup>541</sup> This prediction would in less than a year turn out to be true.

## BACK IN BLUE COLOURS TOWARDS WATERLOO

When the war ended in April, Prussia suddenly announced that it would take over responsibility for the Legion, which was confirmed by an agreement on 2 June 1814. Clausewitz intended to apply for a special decision due to the king's previous malicious posture.<sup>542</sup> But this application was probably not sent since he was commissioned colonel in the Prussian infantry on 10 April 1815.<sup>543</sup> Marie praised Gneisenau as the personification of the good cause, but at the same time she worried about Clausewitz. He had not so many good friends left and was depressed to have missed the final decisive events; but Gneisenau answered her some weeks later:<sup>544</sup>

'The race is not to the swift' says the Bible. Our poor Clausewitz was equipped with the will and the talent to take active part in this war but was in the last part kept back from the large scene of action. He must console himself with the idea that the rest of us still lived in uncertainty, while he already viewed the humiliated enemy fleeing [in Russia] and was a participant in the larger, more horrible work, while we in the second part of the war just completed an easier task.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Masent 17 March 1814, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 365-66

<sup>540</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Gotteghem 2 April 1814, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 367-70

<sup>541</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Lessines 4 April and Tournah 11 April 1814, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 370-72

<sup>542</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, 12 April 1814, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 372-73

<sup>543</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 244

<sup>544</sup> Marie to Gneisenau, Berlin 20 April 1814, Pertz & Delbruck, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 248-49

<sup>545</sup> Gneisenau to Marie, Paris 5 May 1814, Pertz & Delbruck, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 249-51

The Russo-German Legion was transferred in July to the 3rd army corps commanded by General Kleist von Nollendorf in the area of Aachen and renamed the German Legion. The unit had a bad reputation and was not considered reliable. All of the Legion's 5697 men, most of them from different *Freikorps*, were checked carefully and many were discharged during the summer. Clausewitz became commander of the Legion's second brigade, which redeployed to the Rhine area in September and was there reinforced by conscripts. Nearby units were instructed not to make unseemly comments on their new comrades-in-arms, which indicated their very low status in the Prussian army. Clausewitz was given command of the whole Legion, two brigades, in the late autumn.<sup>546</sup>

He titled himself 'interim commander of an interim Legion' in a letter to Gneisenau before Christmas. Boyen had now been appointed Minister of War and tried to help him with a new position, but Clausewitz had little faith since he perceived that the king's anger had not disappeared. Gneisenau had written to Clausewitz on 12 December and asked for the text he wrote for the crown prince on his departure to Russia, on behalf of the current tutor Major Reiche. Clausewitz replied that he had lost his copy to the Prince of Oldenburg and Herr von Stein. His first draft was however still in luggage left behind in Königsberg on his way to Russia.<sup>547</sup>

Clausewitz and Gneisenau had had a gap in their correspondence since the end of hostilities, since both regarded it as the other's turn to write. Life in the Legion made Clausewitz depressed. He felt an outsider with an uncertain future and was therefore sincerely happy for the friendship Gneisenau showed him around Christmas 1814. In mid-February he was granted six weeks' leave to take the hot baths in Aachen.<sup>548</sup> In parallel to the psychological pressure, the gout frequently caused him great pain. As an educated man he found physical pain endurable when he knew the spirit was set free. And Clausewitz's spirit had indeed been set free by his military career ambitions. Now, when prospects looked very tiny he wrote about a new way to liberate his soul: 'If I could freely dispose my time and energy, not being too old and neglected, I would throw myself into the arms of *Wissenschaften* [research and scholarship].'<sup>549</sup>

The Congress of Vienna started in October 1814, chaired by Metternich. Gneisenau explained the political game that took place to settle the new Europe, which Clausewitz found hard to understand. To return territories to France, such as the Netherlands, before the end of the Congress was a mistake in his opinion.<sup>550</sup> Clausewitz had previously compared with irony his own confused situation with the political confusion in Vienna: '... at least just as confusing as it appears at the Congress

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<sup>546</sup> Schramm, *Clausewitz*, 454-55; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 244-45

<sup>547</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Kant[onierungs] Quartier Mühlheim am Rhein 21/24 December 1814, *Schriften* (1990), 161-65. See also Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 12 December 1814, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 301-303

<sup>548</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Solingen 9 February 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 165-67

<sup>549</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 27 February 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 168-70, cf. 170

<sup>550</sup> Compare Clausewitz to Gneisenau 21/24 December; 9 February 1815; and 27 February, *Schriften* (1990), 161-70

in Vienna. I have often comforted myself how incomplete everything is in our world, this as well, as every planet fitted with moons is, according to the astronomers, a young star and still in the process of development, so the moon should come to heel as mentor. It is only a pity that I and the Congress in Vienna cannot ask the moon for advice about our troubles.<sup>551</sup>

Gneisenau pointed out that the new Prussian state that emerged in this process would have about eleven million citizens and be considerably larger than the old state.<sup>552</sup> The two started to exchange thoughts on the defence of the new state, such as new assembly areas, fortifications and lines of operation. But before the new Europe was settled Napoleon left his banishment on Elba and returned to France on 1 March 1815. Clausewitz learned of Napoleon's return when he was on vacation in Aachen with Marie. Aachen had been a French town since 1794 but would soon be Prussian territory according to the Congress of Vienna.

Clausewitz estimated that the French people for the moment were positive towards but not enthusiastic about the Bourbon government. The Bourbons had been installed in power by the allies. Bonaparte's revival could possibly turn them into passive spectators in Clausewitz's opinion. The army would probably be loyal to Bonaparte since many of his former commanders were still in key positions. The situation could actually once more make Bonaparte the unconditional arbiter of France. A civil war was also possible.<sup>553</sup>

Napoleon entered Paris on 20 March just after the Royal Court had escaped towards the Belgian border. The very next day Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau with a new estimation of the political situation. He judged that the risk of revolution and civil war would fade away quickly, only Marshal Ney's position remained unclear. The best thing Louis XVIII could do in his opinion was to give Ney as much force as possible and convince him to fight a decisive battle with Napoleon to clear the political map. Clausewitz asked his friend to pass on this estimation to Boyen as Minister of War.<sup>554</sup> But Ney and his forces had already changed sides and Napoleon had started to call himself Emperor again. His 100 days in power had started.

Clausewitz asked Gneisenau for support to be assigned to a proper Prussian unit for the impending campaign. He also asked for a blue uniform, because he still wore Russian green due to the lack of Prussian uniforms.<sup>555</sup> The alliance against Napoleon

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<sup>551</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Kant[onierungs] Quartier Mühlheim am Rhein 21 December 1814, *Schriften* (1990), 161-65, cf. 162. '...es wenigstens eben so konfus aussieht als auf dem Wiener Kongreß habe ich mich oft allein damit getröstet wie unvollkommen alles auf unserer Erde ist, die ja , wie alle mit Monden versehen Planeten nach der Meinung der Astronomen selbst ein jugendlicher Stern und noch im Werden begriffen ist, weshalb ihr auch der Mond als Mentor beigegeben seyn soll. Nur schade, daß ich und der Wiener Kongreß den Mond in unseren Nöthen nicht um Rath fragen können.'

<sup>552</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, 18 February 1815, Pertz & Delbruck, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 322-23

<sup>553</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 17 March 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 168-70, cf. 170

<sup>554</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 21 March 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 173-75. Compare Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1008-14

<sup>555</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 17 March 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 171-73

was renewed at the end of March. The numbers on paper showed an allied superiority of approximately two to one.<sup>556</sup> Clausewitz was re-employed as colonel on the Prussian general staff on 30 March. Blücher was at the same time reappointed commander of the mobilized field army, with Gneisenau as his Chief of General Staff and Grolman as *Generalquartiermeister*. Gneisenau tried to get Clausewitz back with him in Blücher's headquarters.

He suggested to Clausewitz that Blücher still lacked an *erster Adjutant*, responsible for handling the personal affairs of the army. This should be a hard-working person and no intriguer.<sup>557</sup> Boyen as Minister of War handled all senior appointments for the king. He informed Gneisenau that several circumstances had forced him to take one step at a time regarding Clausewitz's position. The king had now unreservedly accepted Clausewitz to be appointed chief of the general staff in General Thilmann's 3 Army Corps. This was a first position of trust, which implied he could be advanced to Blücher's staff later.<sup>558</sup> The Prussian field army consisted of four army corps, deployed to positions in Belgium. Wellington commanded the other allied army, which consisted of units from the Netherlands, the German states and Britain.

Clausewitz's appointment was announced on 22 April and he arrived in Luxembourg on 7 May where the corps had almost completed mobilization.<sup>559</sup> His corps started operations a couple of days later and the first small combat took place on 12 May between Arlon and Bouillon. Clausewitz found Thilmann to be a good man and friendly to him. The social atmosphere in the headquarters was indeed happy with many laughs together, which seems to have given Clausewitz a good moral injection.<sup>560</sup> The army corps consisted initially of two infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment, in addition some *Landwehr* cavalry commanded by Clausewitz's dynamic brother-in-law Friedrich von der Marwitz; a strength of altogether nine battalions. He was proud to see the new army and the big difference that had occurred since 1794. He often asked himself how much of this would have been possible without Scharnhorst.<sup>561</sup>

The 'good cause' to remove Bonaparte from power took also help from religion. Clausewitz's favourite preacher was, as mentioned earlier, Schleiermacher, known for his patriotic sermons.<sup>562</sup> To promote the good cause and enter combat with God's help, the *Katechismus für den Deutschen Kriegs und Wehrmann* (Catechism for the German Soldier) was published in 1814.<sup>563</sup> The preface to this religious textbook taught that Napoleon Bonaparte was the evil tyrant who had forgotten 'the right' when he usurped power in 1799; but God had finally corrected his hubris in Russia.

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<sup>556</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1014-15

<sup>557</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, 16 April 1815, Pertz & Delbruck, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 496-97

<sup>558</sup> Boyen to Gneiseanu, Wien 15 April 1815, Pertz & Delbruck, *Gneisenau*, Vol4/5, 499-500

<sup>559</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 247

<sup>560</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Bastonge 14 May 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 375

<sup>561</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Ciney 23 May 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 378-79

<sup>562</sup> Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 4/5, 313

<sup>563</sup> *Katechismus für den Deutschen Kriegs und Wehrmann, worin gelehrt wird, wie ein christlicher Wehrmann seyn und mit Gott in den Streit gehen soll.* (1814)



The German soldier now fought for 'God, Freedom and *Vaterland*' according to the 'encouragement song' suggested to be sung in before a battle. Clausewitz was euphoric to Marie about *Feldprediger* Schultz's sermon on 16 May 1815 to the new soldiers of Stülpnagel's regiment. 'I have never heard the obligations of soldiers and citizens so intimately merged with each other as this time, never such presentation of the oath.'<sup>564</sup> This was how public enthusiasm for combat was made real. Clausewitz almost never addressed God or religion in his letters and texts, but faith as well as political-moral animation was indeed present and crucial to the army he loved.

The situation in the Belgian theatre of war was calm at the end of May and for a further week. The rumour of Bonaparte's arrival and French movement of forces around 8 June caused increased activity and tension rose.<sup>565</sup> During the night of 14 June the corps headquarters received intelligence of Bonaparte's arrival in Maubeuge a couple of hours earlier, which was close to the Belgian border. To Clausewitz this indicated an imminent offensive. This was bad because the corps still lacked three regiments and 60 guns. In addition, the Russians and Austrians were not ready for operations. This was however not entirely bad, Clausewitz considered, because the Prussian army could now operate freely and fight united with no fortresses to consider in the rear.<sup>566</sup>

At the same time Bonaparte actually switched to the offensive and commenced operations with the *Armée du Nord*. His aim was first to defeat the Prussian army and keep his two opponents' armies separated. The first encounter took place at Charleroi where the Prussian 1 Corps was pushed northwards. The Prussian army now failed to fully concentrate before the first major combat took place. The 2 and 3 Corps took up defensive positions along with 1 corps between Sombreffe and Ligny in the morning of 16 June. Clausewitz's 3 Corps was employed on the eastern flank covering the army's line of retreat with 29,500 men. This position turned out to be outside the main combat zone in the centre.

The French attack started at half past two in the afternoon. The two Prussian corps in the centre took severe casualties. Napoleon followed his usual tactical pattern to conclude the combat. The Old Guard, the elite of the army kept as reserve, was called in to conclude victory. The Prussian line imploded around eight o'clock in the rainy evening. French victory was near when the 72-year-old Blücher, strikingly nicknamed '*Alt Vorwärts*', put himself at the head of a massive cavalry charge as a counter-attack. But this desperate attempt to restore equilibrium was beaten off within an hour. In addition Blücher's horse was killed in the attack and he found himself cut off in the

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<sup>564</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Ciney 17 May 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 375. 'Nie habe ich die Bürger und Soldatenpflichten so innig verschmelzen hören wie da, nie eine solche darstellung des Eides.'

<sup>565</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Ciney 24 May/10 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 379

<sup>566</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Ciney 15 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 380

midst of French forces.<sup>567</sup> While this bloody combat took place Clausewitz's corps had the task of defending the flank where no major combat took place.<sup>568</sup>

Gneisenau assumed command in the absence of Blücher and decided not to retreat towards Namur and the Rhine as expected. Instead he ordered retreat towards Wavre, giving up the natural line of retreat, which spoiled Napoleon's plan to keep the enemy armies separated. Blücher managed to return to headquarters later in the night. He decided the Prussian army should keep the allied agreement and join forces with Wellington, which was possible due to Gneisenau's brave decision.<sup>569</sup> The four corps of the Prussian army converged at Wavre next day.

The 3 Corps had retreated with great difficulties during the night, 'the longest night in Clausewitz's life', and did not reach Wavre until late in the rainy afternoon of 17 June. The tired Clausewitz wrote to Marie that he was alive but his corps had lost 1200 men. He was very angry; the Prussian army had failed to concentrate in time and the Allied armies had failed to join forces. This had given Bonaparte a more favourable correlation of forces. The Allied forces consisted of 190,000 soldiers but had fought the combat with only 85,000 soldiers against Bonaparte's 75,000.<sup>570</sup>

Napoleon instructed Marshal Grouchy early in the morning of 17 June to pursue the retreating Prussians, while he took on Wellington's army. The British field marshal received information about the Prussian defeat when his own army was engaged with Marshal Ney's forces, the left wing of the *Armée du Nord*, at the crossroads at Quatre Bras. Wellington pondered the necessity to evacuate the theatre when he received Blücher's message that two Prussian corps, at least, would join forces the next day. Clausewitz's corps was tasked to be army reserve and to observe from a position at Wavre, approximately 16 kilometres north-east of Waterloo. This task implied defence of the river Dyle.

Grouchy's reconnaissance sweep detected Prussian forces at Wavre early in the morning of 18 June. He was not able to attack until the afternoon when the major battle of Waterloo had started. The only force left in the village of Wavre was Clausewitz's corps. The attacker had a double numerical superiority; 32,000 against 16,000 defenders.<sup>571</sup> The French attack put hard pressure on Thilmann and Blücher

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<sup>567</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1034-47

<sup>568</sup> Thilmann's biographer proposed later that the 'cautious Clausewitz' had influenced the usually offensive Thilmann, thus in negative sense. He stated that Clausewitz lacked the 'großen Unternehmungsgeist des Feldherren', thus the great go-ahead spirit of commanders. See Herman v. Petersdorff, *General Johann Adolph Freiherr von Thilmann ein Charakterbild aus der napoleonischen Zeit* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1894), 294

<sup>569</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1058

<sup>570</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Wavre at Brussels 17 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 380-81. See also the longer summary in Clausewitz to Marie, Le Plessis Piquet at Paris 3 July 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 384-89

<sup>571</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1072-77

was asked twice for support on the way to Waterloo. Blücher refused any division of forces with the laconic answer: 'The decision is in front of us, not behind'.<sup>572</sup>

'I am well', Clausewitz wrote to Marie on 21 June, 'as well as our friends and our close acquaintance are, except for Tiedemann, who has received a minor wound.'<sup>573</sup> The corps had been separated from the army, so he was unaware of what was going to happen. Grouchy had continued to attack even after the defeat at Waterloo and had pushed the corps towards Namur. The corps had been tasked to pursue Grouchy's forces but Clausewitz had estimated the distance as too far to be possible. Later the same day he wrote a new letter telling Marie that his corps, along with 1 and 4 Corps, was marching full speed ahead towards Paris. He now believed Bonaparte was finished, no longer able to fight a single combat. The 2 Corps was left behind to encircle a pocket in the border area.<sup>574</sup>

Marie was told from Paris at the end of June that Grouchy's two corps, thus 30-40,000 men, had been able to withdraw towards Paris quite intact. These units had seemingly ceased to exist however, disbanding themselves, due to the rapid allied offensive towards Paris. This made French defence of the capital less likely. Clausewitz was however sure a 'horrible drama' would unfold to the world if Paris was defended. The battle in Belgium and the forced march towards Paris were a terrible experience for the corps. Little food, barely any sleep and constantly on the move for more than two weeks. Many soldiers could not cope with the effort and died of fatigue or committed suicide in despair. Now in the outskirts of Paris, he had visited the lovely Versailles with all its art, but he could not enjoy this happy moment and aesthetic experience because he missed Marie so much.<sup>575</sup>

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This chapter has elucidated Clausewitz's personal experience of war 1812-1815. These events became the way-pointing epitome of war in his future theorising. The chapter has also pointed out the 'Good Cause' and patriotism as *Politik*, which rivalled ruling policy and old structures. It has summarized Clausewitz's deeds in the inner circle of the Prussian Headquarters to point out his influence, notably on Gneisenau.

The evident close practical relation of *Politik* and *Kriegskunst* has been expounded. Political direction of military command was indeed clear and present to Clausewitz. The chapter has noted his objection to the pursued strategy of limited aim, which followed Metternich's policy of negotiating peace with Napoleon. In addition, that he

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<sup>572</sup> Cited in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 4/5, 411

<sup>573</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Gemblour at Namur 21 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 381. *Hauptmann* Tiedemann was the younger brother of Clausewitz's old friend Carl Ludwig v. Tiedemann

<sup>574</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Gemblour at Namur 21 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 381-82

<sup>575</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Dammartin at Paris 29 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 382-84; Clausewitz to Marie, Le Plessis Piquet at Paris 3 July 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 384-89; See also a more civilian summary of the march to Paris in Clausewitz to Marie, Le Plessis Piquet at Paris 7 July, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 389-95

considered it would require a book to straighten out the 'pseudo-truth' of ruling political-military reasoning. Seemingly, *Vom Kriege* was his theoretical response.

To view Clausewitz solely as a philosopher gives a slightly distorted impression. He was in the middle of events and the inner circles of power for a long time. Clausewitz was bold enough to follow his convictions and apparently also good in practice as a general staff officer. He contributed to the forming of Prussian strategy, seemingly with a good grasp of political and military realities. Note that Clausewitz was good enough to influence his determined and energetic superior friends in Prussia's High Command. Basically, we should therefore read Clausewitz as a clever pragmatist, who also possessed and developed the gift to think theory appositely.



## 6. AFTER WATERLOO

### MILITARY THINKING AND POLITIK IN THE CONTINUATION OF WAR

The King arrived in Paris yesterday evening [11 July 1815], and when he cancelled the instruction to blast away the Bridge of Jena (after three small mines had actually detonated without the slightest effect). This tragedy was transformed into a farce and the grace of the French towards us somewhat less enhanced. Whatever you will: I find our behaviour not to be of the noblest character, at the straight place the Victor stands most beautifully, and which as a consequence of these fickle counter-effects [*wunderlichen Gegenwirkungen* cf. the later fickle trinity in the revised *Grundvorstellung*] took on something gauche and ridiculous. Heaven only knows how it will be with peace.<sup>576</sup>

This chapter visualizes Clausewitz's situation and practical doings in the aftermath of Waterloo when he started to write the work that later became *Vom Kriege*. The next chapter will elaborate theoretical aspects in more detail. The practical side informs the theoretical side. This chapter elaborates first, Clausewitz's observations about the tricky transition to peace in France in the summer of 1815, where he criticizes the crude and not politically shrewd behaviour of his colleagues. Further treated is his observation of the dynamic enmity in Le Mans, which became part of his theoretical core. Secondly, the happy time in Koblenz as Gneisenau's chief of general staff is described. Thirdly, Clausewitz's work on plans for the new western theatre is analysed to provide some insights into him as a planner. Finally, Clausewitz's political deeds and rehabilitation are investigated to bring out his pragmatism, disproving the image of

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<sup>576</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Fontainebleau 12 July 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 398-401, cf. 400. 'Der König ist vorgestern Abend in Paris angekommen, und da er den Befehl zur Sprengung der Brücke von Jena zurückgenommen hat (nachdem drei kleine Minen wirklich angezündet worden waren, ohne die mindeste Wirkung zu tun), so wird dieses Trauerspiel in eine Farce verwandelt und der Anmut der Franzosen etwas weniger gegen uns gesteigert. Sei dem, wie ihm wolle: ich finde, daß unser Benehmen nicht den nobelen Charakter hat, der Siegern gerade am Schönsten steht, und daß es im Konflur dieser wunderlichen Gegenwirkungen sogar etwas Gauches und Lächerliches bekommt. Wie es nun mit dem Frieden werden wird, weiß der Himmel.'

him as a naive idealist. Far from naïve, he emerges as a person fully aware of tricky political and military realities.

#### TRICKY TRANSITION TO PEACE IN FRANCE

The transition to peace between revenge, a new political governance of France and disarmament did not show the Prussians in a very favourable light, according to Clausewitz's diary. French forces had received an ultimatum to evacuate Paris before 7 July 1815 and the Prussian 1 Corps was tasked to occupy Paris to enforce a dictated peace. Clausewitz's 3 Corps was to follow and observe remaining French forces. Prussia had set very hard demands on France, including one hundred million francs in reparations, clothing for 100,000 soldiers and a great number of horses. All National Guard units were to be disbanded and the Prussian troops in Paris were to be fed with extra good food.

The question of the new political governance of France was tricky. The Prussian high command lacked a clear political vision, in Clausewitz's opinion, and this included Gneisenau. Louis XVIII was treated in a dubious way just because he was not liked. Clausewitz could not understand this political posture, because there were no good alternatives for the moment. Louis entered Paris on 9 July without the agreement of Prussia. Clausewitz's corps was then tasked to march through the streets of Paris and visit every symbolic place of French power during the same night. To even more enforce Prussian power and the right of the victor, two symbolic actions were planned. The Bridge of Jena and the Arc de Triomphe were to be destroyed.<sup>577</sup> Marie was told with concern, as the quote above indicates, of the risk of fickle counter-actions and effects (*Gegenwirkungen*) of harshly enforced submission and this became part of Clausewitz's later theorizing.

The Prussian rituals of victory and revenge increased hostility and made peace more difficult. They were just stupid, in Clausewitz's opinion. Marshal Davoust still commanded an army of 50,000 soldiers in the Loire Valley and French peasants had begun to make sporadic attacks on Allied forces in the countryside. The British did not demand any reparations and acted more adroitly in a political sense, not driven by the passion of revenge. As such they acted as the master, with proud forces and a clean record that made them look even better in the historical record of this catastrophe. The root of the problem was in Clausewitz's opinion that the Prussians were falling between two stools, spoiling relations with both the French government and the French people without knowing what they wished to achieve.

He summarized the problem of transition in three questions. First, who should rule France? Secondly, how should France be pacified? There was an obvious risk of continued hostilities, necessitating a huge army of occupation. Thirdly, what guarantees for security could be agreed upon for the future? He found it also difficult to maintain military discipline after the great military efforts. The units acted in the same way as the French had done as victors. Even the officers showed a spirit of covetousness. Clausewitz hoped for a quick settlement of peace so Prussia could put

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<sup>577</sup> Clausewitz, 'Fortsetzung meines Tagesbuchs', *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 395-98

this dreadful situation behind her.<sup>578</sup> The behaviour of the Prussian forces actually became an issue, which Clausewitz however downplayed later.<sup>579</sup>

The corps headquarters were situated in the castle of Fontainebleau together with three other headquarters. The castle, an old symbol of French power, was very large. Clausewitz had five rooms at his personal disposal. 3 Corps moved to Le Mans at the end of July, while Prussia was still pressing for huge reparations. Peace was still uncertain indeed. Gneisenau, now terribly exhausted, told Clausewitz about Metternich's way to settle peace, secure a European balance of power and look after Austria's interests. Clausewitz's tired friend was afraid Prussia would lose its share: actually most things looked black to him at the end of July 1815.<sup>580</sup>

French uprisings were still a possibility when Marie got permission with the help of Gneisenau to visit Clausewitz. Some twenty-two years earlier, a stormy combat had taken place in Le Mans, on 12 December 1793, related to the popular uprising in the Vendée in 1793-1796 against the revolutionary government. Clausewitz slept in the same room, still marked by combat, as the young royalist commander Henri de la Rochejaquelein had used. Influenced by the surroundings he read a history of the uprising published in 1815 by Rochejaquelein's widow. He found the book interesting because it captured the spirit of events and time well. As such, it was very different from Alphonse de Beuchamp's standard history of the war, *Histoire de la Vendée et des chouans*, from 1806.<sup>581</sup> Clausewitz had written a strategic overview of the war in the Vendée, maybe around 1811, when he was teaching small wars and thinking about uprisings.<sup>582</sup> He wrote also a short text on these events after he had read more about Rochejaquelein and was concerned about the transition to peace. The editor of the two final volumes of *Werke* (1837), his friend and colleague Karl von Gröben, amended the later text to the original, which is not observed in the literature. Clausewitz wrote, probably in the second part of 1815 or in 1816:

The Vendées, brought to the edge of despair by cruelty, had won new hate, new powers, new formidableness; they surpassed the most furious republicans, and coerced them to return to temperance. Their cruelty alone had transformed the wisest measures into corrupt ones, they alone evoked anew the war on life and death.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Fontainebleau 12 July 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 398-401

<sup>579</sup> See Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Paris 27 July 1815, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 4/5, 592-93; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Estampes 27 July 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 183-84

<sup>580</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Estampes 24 July 1815; Thoury on march to Le Mans 30 July 1815; Marschquartier Sancheville 30 July 1815; Le Mans 5 August, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 405-09; Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Paris 27 July 1815, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 4/5, 592-93

<sup>581</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Le Mans 18 August 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 187-88

<sup>582</sup> Clausewitz [1810-11], 'Übersicht des Krieges in der Vendée 1793.', *Werke* 10/10, 321-47. Dated to 1811 by Caemmerer, *Clausewitz* (1905), 77

<sup>583</sup> Clausewitz [1815-16], 'amended note to Übersicht des Krieges in der Vendée 1793.', *Werke* 10/10, 347-48, cf. 348. 'Die Vendéer, von der Grausamkeit auf die Spitze der Verzweiflung getrieben, haben neuen haß, neue kräfte, neue Fuchtharkeit gewonnen; sie überbieten die



This recognition depicts in short the principle of enmity and fickle reciprocity that underpinned Clausewitz's future theorizing. His note indicated faintly that the republicans were calling forth war on life and death again. This was very important for Clausewitz's future way of thinking strategy. War *per se* was conceptually unlimited, contrary to the suggestions of rational and complex strategic systems of the Enlightenment. In fact every aggressive military effort could have the reverse effect and strengthen resistance instead, an insight which was at the core of Clausewitz's future theorizing. 'Evoked war on life and death' was not just about governmental political interest, but also about public interest, and hate, as fuel for continues action.

Clausewitz and Marie had the chance of a brief vacation and they visited Paris together in the early autumn. The revival of '*Exerziergeist*', the old spirit of hard military discipline, became a concern when routine started to take over. The *Landwehr* soldiers, who had abandoned their home and families for the safety of their country, were now being treated as young cadets, behaviour Clausewitz regarded as unworthy towards the citizen soldiers.<sup>584</sup>

The official army record of Waterloo was published in the late summer of 1815, but the combat at Wavre on 18-19 June was not included. This was in Clausewitz's opinion a misleading presentation for doubtful reasons. The 3 Corps had in fact tied up an enemy force of about two and half corps, approximately 30-40,000 soldiers, preventing them from joining the main decision. In the following year an anonymous article appeared that accused the 3 Corps of letting Grouchy's forces escape. Clausewitz thought at first this was the work of one Major-general Valentini.

Valentini had been Clausewitz's opposite number in the 4 Corps, but had failed to get 4 Corps in the right place at the right time. He was a man who believed in the military theory of the Enlightenment, preferring clever patterns to brutal combat. His failure had been serious indeed, subjecting him to Gneisenau's severe official criticism. Grolman, now chief of general staff, conducted an investigation to identify the author since many officers felt insulted.

Clausewitz found the outspokenness harmless, and felt that the author should not be repressed on principle. On the one hand he regarded the essay as no worse than other similar pieces. On the other the reasoning was very weak and limited, which illustrated the difficulty of military criticism: 'I find the opinion that it is loutish to judge after the success, loutish in itself, since success in war is as the quicksilver of the thermometer and our judgment is not according to the described scale. *Apropos* this campaign I recall that this fervency of war has again set (indeed not strictly fluid) the Russian stock

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wüthendsten Republikaner, und zwingen sie, zur Mäßigung zurückzukehren. Die Grausamkeit allein hat die weisesten Maßregeln in verderbliche verwandelt, sie allein ruft den Krieg auf Tod und Leben von Neuem hervor.'

<sup>584</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Le Mans 11 September 1815, *Schriften* (1990), 189-90

decorations a'flowing, and 400 crosses and stars of all kinds have poured onto our clothes.'<sup>585</sup>

Later accounts, especially by those who favoured the German spirit of offensive, neglected Clausewitz's description and presented the action of 3 Corps as cautious and almost flawed. These later formed an image, perhaps unjustified, of Clausewitz as cautious and less able in command situations.<sup>586</sup> Distinguishing knowledge and rationality in a command situation was quite different from making an inquiry later from a new horizon with more information at hand. Clausewitz pointed out in 1816 that Grouchy's forces had actually been almost three times larger than the intelligence available to the allies on 17-18 June 1814 had depicted them.<sup>587</sup> Gneisenau replied that the anonymous author was tragically *Rittmeister* Goschützki and found, for comparison, that many recent accounts of the war were erroneous and indeed not positive to his own achievements. He, however, lacked the energy to challenge all these accusations and preferred therefore to look away.<sup>588</sup>

### THE ROUND TABLE IN KOBLENZ

Clausewitz was appointed chief of general staff to the newly-established *General-Kommando am Niederrhein* situated in Koblenz, on 30 October 1815.<sup>589</sup> The new military organisation divided Prussia into seven similar commands, which in 1820 were renamed army corps even in peacetime. The new command in Koblenz on the frontier with France was first commanded by Gneisenau. He handpicked his new staff, but had to stay in Paris until the Second Treaty of Paris was signed on 20 November 1815 and arrived in Koblenz at the end of that month.

At approximately the same time Clausewitz and Marie settled down in the little town at the confluence of the Mosel and the Rhine. Koblenz had been conquered by the French Revolutionary army in 1794, but became Prussian territory again under the terms of the Congress of Vienna. The friendship of Gneisenau and Clausewitz became stronger after Scharnhorst's death. Their families met regularly from this time until they died. Their correspondence reveals an intimate friendship, a mutual trust and

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<sup>585</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 27 December 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 238-43, cf. 241-42. 'Ich finde die Meinung, daß es pöbelhaft sei nach dem Erfolg zu Urteilen selbst etwas pöbelhaft, denn in Kriegs Sachen ist der Erfolg das Queksilber des Thermometers und unseres Urteil nichts als die beigeschriebene Skala. *Apropos* von diesem Feldzug würde ich erinnert, daß dessen Kriegs Gluth die (freilich nicht strengflüssige) Russische Ordensmaterie wieder in Fluß gesetzt hat, und daß 400 Kreuze und Sterne aller Art auf unsere Kleider geflossen sind.

<sup>586</sup> See Petersdorff, *Thilmann ein Charakterbild*, 300-02; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Napoleons Untergang*, Vol 1 (Berlin: 1904), 457-59. See also the discussion of this view in Hahlweg, *Clausewitz Soldat-Politiker-Denker*, 41; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 249-50

<sup>587</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 27 December 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 238-43. Clausewitz wanted in September 1815 to know more about Grouchy's forces and action. See Clausewitz to Gneiseanu, Le Mans 11 September, *Schriften* (1990), 189-90

<sup>588</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmannsdorf 5 February 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 182-86, cf. 184

<sup>589</sup> Hahlweg 'Vorbemerkung Korrespondenz Clausewitz – Gneisenau', *Clausewitz, Schriften* (1990), 205.

respect. As a sign of this trust Gneisenau sent Clausewitz to assist Wilhelm von Humboldt to negotiate the new Dutch-Prussian border at the meeting of the newly-established *Deutsche Bund* (1815-1866) in Frankfurt in January 1816. Humboldt expressed later in a letter gratitude and appreciation of Clausewitz's diplomatic talent.<sup>590</sup>

Gneisenau started a small round-table society, a '*Tafelrunde*', among the civil and military newcomers in Koblenz. Members included Lieutenant-colonel Carl Graf von Gröben (1788-1876), who had been Clausewitz's student in Berlin and comrade-in-arms in the Russian-German Legion.<sup>591</sup> Scharnhorst's oldest son Wilhelm von Scharnhorst (1796-1854) was there. He married Gneisenau's daughter Agnes in 1818 and was always looked after by Clausewitz.

The Eastern Prussian poet Max von Schenkendorff (1783-1817) was also a sociable member. He wrote a poem '*Die Tafel am Rhein*' (1816), which celebrated the jovial Gneisenau as commander and liberator: ...'I sing of the commander and the weapons that bravely free the Fatherland. May they create eternal right and the victory of dear Christianity. In my boyhood dreams I have seen the old knighthood, I also see the oak tree in the commander's insignia...' <sup>592</sup> This was the romantic picture of Gneisenau as a true hero among his friends; a view of the commander that certainly also formed part of Clausewitz's understanding of high command when he started to write about strategy later in that year. A painting of the '*Tafelrunde*' has been preserved in the Garrison of Koblenz.<sup>593</sup>

But Gneisenau was also frequently ill and very tired after almost ten years of intense activity at the heart of army reform and high command. He wanted to spend more time with his family and take better care of his children's education. His political energy for a steadfast resistance to French power had made him a political enemy of conservative royalists. The ambition to organise public uprisings in 1808-1811 against French supremacy and his pursuit of a decision at all costs in the campaigns of 1813-1815 were interpreted in bad faith as revolutionary tendencies. Even his close friend, Amalie Begulin, regarded him as a possible 'Bonaparte' in other circumstances due to his reckless struggle for his cause.<sup>594</sup> Despite spectacular military success he was frequently accused of being a member of a secret society seeking power. Gneisenau had actually been labelled *Jacobin* since he suddenly became famous after his heroic defence of Colberg in 1807.

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<sup>590</sup> Wilhelm v. Humboldt to Gneisenau, 23 January 1816, cited in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 258

<sup>591</sup> He published after the death of Marie part IX and X of Clausewitz's *Werke* in 1837.

<sup>592</sup> Max v. Schenkendorf, '*Die Tafel am Rhein Koblenz 1816*', *Max von Schenkendorf's poetischer Nachlaß* (Berlin: Eichler, 1832) 87-89, cf. 88. '...Den Feldherr sing ich und die Waffen, Die kühn das Vaterland befreit, Sie mögen ewig Recht verschaffen und Sieg der theuern Chritenheit. So hab ich wohl im knabentraume die alte Ritterschaft gesehn, Ich sehe gleich dem Eichenbaume Im Waffenschmuck den Feldherrn stehn...'

<sup>593</sup> See a print in Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, *Freiheit ohne Krieg? Beiträge zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorie von Carl von Clausewitz* (Bonn: Dümmler, 1980), 12

<sup>594</sup> Cited in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 10

Finally, Gneisenau had had enough and tendered his resignation on grounds of weak health, without speaking to Clausewitz or the staff. The king partly accepted Gneisenau's resignation by putting him on indefinite leave from 20 April 1816. He left Koblenz at the beginning of May for his family in Berlin. Clausewitz wrote almost instantly that he and the staff wanted him back soon.<sup>595</sup> Gneisenau was however relieved of duty at the end of that month until his service was required. He was succeeded by Lieutenant-general Albrecht Georg von Hake (1768-1835).<sup>596</sup>

Hake had been in the War Ministry with Scharnhorst and Clausewitz from May 1809 to May 1812. Scharnhorst had disliked him because he paid no respect and tried constantly to undermine the radical parts of the army reform.<sup>597</sup> Hake represented a conservative and traditionalist wing of the army elite, which Clausewitz disliked. The two seem however to have accepted each other by paying their mutual respect.<sup>598</sup> Clausewitz was cautious about Hake in his letters, while Marie was less diplomatic.<sup>599</sup> Both wanted their friend back in Koblenz, which never happened. Gneisenau encouraged Clausewitz to use his faculties to write more about the higher conduct of war. Boyen was told in August 1816 that Clausewitz planned to write an up-to-date, high-level Field Service Regulation.

Colonel von Clausewitz has set his mind to do work which he would undertake passionately due to his faculties, but needs tranquilly to accomplish, with no intention however to resign from his present position. Since there is a lack of a Higher Field Service Regulation [*Felddienstreglement in höher Ansicht*] which meets the requirements of contemporary war, a service regulation of this kind would do our partly ignorant officers a great deal of good. It would contain instructions on quarters and camps, on marches, *Gefechtlehre* [teachings of tactics in combat], instructions for attack on redoubts and so on, [and] instructions for line officers [*Linienoffiziers*] in the conduct of sieges and so on. How good a Service Regulation of this kind would be, completed by Colonel von Clausewitz, from the clarity of his presentation and from the sum of his knowledge, I leave to your Excellence to judge.<sup>600</sup>

Gneisenau concluded by pointing out Clausewitz's rare analytical talent and assured him of his confidence in an original result. The texts may be, as Kessel suggested in 1953, the amended pieces on tactics in *Vom Kriege*.<sup>601</sup> These addressed similar issues, as Gneisenau points out on tactics in combat (*Gefechtlehre*) and tactical division of

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<sup>595</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 13 May 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 215-16

<sup>596</sup> Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol5/5, 3-20. See also Friedrich Wilhelm to Gneisenau, 'Allerhöchste Kabinetsordre' Potsdam 20 April/20 May 1816, Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol5/5, 109, 115

<sup>597</sup> Scharnhorst to Staatskanzler Hardenberg, Berlin before 11 March 1812, *Scharnhorsts Briefe*, 425-27

<sup>598</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 30 July 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 217-20

<sup>599</sup> Marie Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 30 August 1816, Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol5/5, 144-46

<sup>600</sup> Gneisenau to Boyen, Karlsbad 5 August 1816, Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol5/5, 131-33

<sup>601</sup> Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 413 n.32

forces (*Einteilung der Streitkräfte*).<sup>602</sup> In conclusion this also suggests the starting point for *Vom Kriege*.

#### PRUDENT PLANNING FOR THE WESTERN THEATRE

Much of the war planning in Koblenz was handled by Clausewitz as chief of general staff. In the first three weeks of September 1816 he conducted a staff ride on horseback to explore Westerwald and the mountains in Sauerland, which were important parts of the Rhine Command's theatre of war.<sup>603</sup> He informed Gneisenau in a set of letters from autumn 1816 to spring 1818 about his estimate of operational factors on the western frontier. In these letters we glimpse Colonel Clausewitz as a staff officer, struggling with the same basic problems as every staff officer in hypothetical war planning without a real political-military context.

An important military aspect of the time was the building of a new line of fortifications, in which *Festung Koblenz* played a key role. The construction work however took a long time due to the lack of skilled workers. Clausewitz concluded after a staff ride between the Lahn and the Ruhr that Düsseldorf as an important road junction needed to be fortified.<sup>604</sup> Clausewitz apparently held presentations for the staff or to another militarily-interested audience. In a lost manuscript from 1816 he addressed the art of fortification.<sup>605</sup>

A new staff ride was made in April 1817 on the Eifel, the western high plateau between Mosel and Rhine, and into the Ardennes exploring the roads towards village crossroads such as Echternach, Malmedy and St Vieth. Clausewitz already observed at this time the limitations of military mobility in this area. It is possible that he wrote a memorandum about Trier and possibilities to fortify this position.<sup>606</sup> He had travelled *incognito*, at least partly, which brought him the opportunity to speak to many people along the way. This confirmed his view that people could escape military service for false reasons and the *Landwehr* needed some adjustments to work properly. He sent Gneisenau a memorandum suggesting improvements.<sup>607</sup> Clausewitz also observed extreme poverty in some places along his tour, which distressed him as extremely as

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<sup>602</sup> Clausewitz [1816-18?], 'Über die organische Einteilung der Streitkräfte', *Vom Kriege*, 1087-96; 'Skizze eines Planes zur Taktik oder Gefechtlehre', *Vom Kriege*, 1097-1102; 'Leitfaden zur Bearbeitung der Taktik oder Gefecht lehre', *Vom Kriege*, 1103-80

<sup>603</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 24 September 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 226-28

<sup>604</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 27 December 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 238-43

<sup>605</sup> Clausewitz [1816], 'Vortrag – Über Befestigungskunst', lost manuscript listed on an inventory-list (author unknown) of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* at the end of 19th century. This list is now part of the Clausewitz collection at the University-library in Münster. The list was published by Hahlweg in *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74

<sup>606</sup> Clausewitz [undated manuscript, April 1817?], 'Memoire über die Befestigung von Trier', *Schriften* (1990), 1125-28. Hahlweg proposed a date of writing in note 1 as early as 1816 without further evidence. See also Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Nassau 29 Juli 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 342-46 for a discussion on Trier and fortifications along Mosel.

<sup>607</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 28 April 1817, amended to this letter 'Einige Bemerkungen über unsere Landwehr-einrichtung', *Schriften* (1990), 260-66/ 267-69

his experience at the Beresina crossing in 1812 had. The reason was the great crop failure of 1816, which led to a dreadful famine well into 1817.<sup>608</sup>

Hake did the most important work without reference to his chief of general staff and left him a *fait accompli*, a procedure that disturbed Clausewitz more and more. He felt like a poodle just writing the tiny details to his master's directions, which left him no satisfaction.<sup>609</sup> Hake sent the king a memorandum on a new military directive for the Rhine frontier in early January 1818. The memorandum was his alone and was completely contrary to Clausewitz's theatre estimate. Hake also presented the memoranda to the visiting *Staatskanzler*, who asked for Clausewitz's opinion. A memorandum on Hake's directive was completed, which he shared with Gneisenau. Hake had outlined a border defence based on Koblenz as 'central point of all his movements', which Clausewitz criticized as most unrealistic.

In short, he argued instead for the importance of Cologne, which should be fortified as a strongpoint of Prussia's western defence.<sup>610</sup> Clausewitz also sent the same or a similar memorandum to Grolman as his superior chief of general staff.<sup>611</sup> A possible draft or manuscript for this document on Prussia's western theatre of war was found in Clausewitz's papers. The rewritten text further emphasized the Rhine as a western 'Barrier' of Prussia.<sup>612</sup> An underpinning document for this theatre analysis included a correlation of forces on the Rhine frontier.<sup>613</sup>

Clausewitz was not impressed by Hake's habit of superficially deciding on what to do before grasping the military problem, implicitly depending on the poverty of his military ideas. To Gneisenau Hake was labelled as a typical product of the older Prussian military culture emanating from the Enlightenment. Clausewitz voiced his contempt for the 'scholarly strategy', which dominated this culture. This was characterized by endless prescriptive systems of military thought, often based on peacetime precepts for war preparation.

As a comparison to this detailed approach to strategy he outlined a short a historical comparison and concluded. 'Only the natural, simply directed against great objects

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<sup>608</sup> Schwarz, *Leben des Generals Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 238

<sup>609</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 12 November/11 December 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 302-7

<sup>610</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 3 February 1818, with the amended text 'Bemerkungen zu dem Memoire des Generalleutnant Hake über unsere militärischen Einrichtungen am Rhein.', *Schriften* (1990), 314-16/317-24

<sup>611</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-32, cf. 326. Hahlweg stated in note 5 to this letter that the memoranda for Grolman could not be found in Clausewitz's papers.

<sup>612</sup> Clausewitz, undated unsigned fragment manuscript [February-March 1818?], 'Zweite Abhandlung über Preußens Kriegs Theater am Rhein. Der Rhein Preußens westliche *Barriere*.', *Schriften* (1990), 1120-25. The list on Clausewitz's Nachlaß at the University library in Münster says about [um] 1817. See G. Goldschmidt, 'Verzeichnis des Clausewitz-Nachlasses im Besitz der Universitätsbibliothek Münster/Westf', amended to *Schriften* (1990), 1178-95, cf. 1181 no 9

<sup>613</sup> Clausewitz, undated manuscript in Gneisenau's Nachlaß [February-May 1818], 'Machtverhältnisse am Rhein.', *Schriften* (1990), 1168-70

(*Gegenstände*) repeats itself in war.’<sup>614</sup> This idea of simplicity underpinned his own strategic reasoning, which he felt reflected historically the conduct of war up to Louis XIV (1638-1714) and after the French Revolution. Clausewitz had no hope to gain acclamation by his ‘natural and artless’ way of strategic reasoning. Some people would just regard it as a desire for novelty, others as stubbornness or plain ignorance. This dilemma partly explains his reluctance to publish his work, but also the more perennial problem of rebelling against established military and political norms.

How to estimate the road system related to the possibility of operating and building fortifications was an important aspect of the staff’s theatre analysis. Clausewitz wrote a memorandum on military considerations regarding the construction of roads to support this analysis, which he also related to public and commercial interests of infrastructure.<sup>615</sup> He had touched upon the same questions during his staff ride on the Eifel and into the Ardennes in April 1817.

In the March letter to Gneisenau he brought up similar aspects related to the estimation of infrastructure so as to prove Hake’s analytical shortcomings. In addition he pointed to the fact that he and Hake never discussed *Staatspolitik*, which implied that these military planning problems were addressed in a political vacuum. General Hake dissipated much of his energy in the construction of fortifications along the Rhine due to the lack of skilled workers. Cologne remained unfortified however and Clausewitz ended his letter with a humble request to Gneisenau: ‘I ask your Excellency to bring up Cologne at your convenience. It is and will remain the main city of the province and the keystone [*der Schlußstein*] of the Rhine defence.’<sup>616</sup>

Principles to adopt for the defence of the Rhine theatre were still being debated in the summer of 1818. Gneisenau had advocated a forward reinforced camp in Trier, which Clausewitz contested. He thought the idea of keeping all forces in a large garrison in peacetime was the best solution, not at least to better meet the diversity of peacetime duties. This and other standpoints indicated that he was far from being a pure theorist, remote from everyday problems. At the same time he admitted to Gneisenau: ‘You know my tendency to develop abstractions of war, like *Grundsätze*, and how very shy I am to tell others about them...’<sup>617</sup>

Clausewitz regarded the function of Trier just as an area to sustain operational mobility, just worthy of minor defence measures due to its forward exposed position. Cologne and Koblenz were in his opinion the most suitable places to assemble forces

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<sup>614</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-32, cf. 328. ‘Nur das Natürliche, das Einfache auf große Gegenstände gerichtete wiederholt sich im Kriege.’

<sup>615</sup> Clausewitz [undated, probably February-March 1818], ‘Ueber die militärischen rücksichten bei anlegung von Straßen’, *Schriften* (1990), 1128-33

<sup>616</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-32, cf. 331 ‘Ich bitte Euer Excellenz nehmen Sie sich Kölns gelegentlich an. Es ist und bleibt die Haupt [stadt] der Provinz und der Schlußstein der Rhein-Verteidigung.’ See also a similar point in Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Nassau 29 July 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 342-46

<sup>617</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Nassau 29 July 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 342-46, cf. 344 ‘Sie kennen meine Neigung zur abstrakten Entwicklung der kriegerischen Grundsätze, und so große Scheu ich habe sie anderen mitzutheilen...’

for the conduct of mobile operations. Clausewitz regarded the 'nature of war' (cf. the next chapter on progression and stagnation of warlike events) as supporting the idea of maintaining freedom of action as long as possible in the opening of hostilities. His concept of defence of the western frontier was consequently based on the idea of mobile operations in front of fortifications, not fighting in a defensive line.

Clausewitz also wrote a similar analysis of Prussia's eastern theatre of war that addressed the construction of roads and a future war with Russia.<sup>618</sup> He pointed to the connection of Eastern Prussia and Silesia for staging operations on the eastern frontier towards Poland and Russia. The text related to the campaigns of Friedrich the Great conducted in Silesia, and it ended with a criticism of Tempelhoff's logistic theory of strategy. The purpose is not clear, but it may have been written as a favour to Gröben, then chief of the general staff in the *General-Kommando* located in Breslau. Grolman focused the preparations for war at this time on developing good military maps and conceptualizing the experience of the latest campaigns to improve the road network. This ambition was reflected in the scope of Clausewitz's theatre studies.<sup>619</sup>

#### POLITICAL REHABILITATION

Clausewitz tried to help Scharnhorst's children. He wanted the political and military establishment to recognize his mentor's great deeds for Prussia. Consequently, reward his children who had prematurely lost their father while he was doing his duty for a country in which he was not even born.<sup>620</sup> He wrote to Boyen as Minister of War about this issue on 29 November 1816. Boyen answered in the middle of January 1817 that he agreed and felt it his duty make Scharnhorst's achievements for Prussia recognized. The time was not right but he hoped he would be able to do something in the summer. He added that the details were not suitable to write about, which indicates the sensitive political climate and security control that prevailed in Prussia after the Napoleonic wars.<sup>621</sup> This was too little for Clausewitz so he approached Field Marshal Blücher on the same matter.<sup>622</sup>

Around the same time Caroline von Berg showed Clausewitz a British article about Scharnhorst. This was written in a country where he was little known, so she asked Clausewitz to write an essay on Scharnhorst, which she promised to translate into English. The idea appealed to Clausewitz, who felt it was their duty to make Scharnhorst's achievements more widely known and recognized in the historical record. He asked Gneisenau to help him correct the manuscript so 'German originality' would not turn away the English reader. He planned to integrate a little celebratory

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<sup>618</sup> Clausewitz [undated and unsigned 1818?], 'Ueber einen künftigen Krieg mit Russland in sofern er einfluß auf die Anlegung der Kunststraße nach Preußen hat', *Schriften* (1990), 1163-70. An approximate date between the signing of the 'Holy Alliance' in September 1815 to 1819 was suggested in Hahlweg, *Clausewitz Soldat-Politiker-Denker*, 47-48

<sup>619</sup> See Görlitz, *Der Deutsche Generalstab*, 71-72

<sup>620</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 4 March 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 243-48. Clausewitz even counted on reasonable sums in an undated/unsigned memorandum published as a note by Hahlweg in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 246 n.4

<sup>621</sup> Boyen to Clausewitz, 15 January, 1817, cited by Hahlweg in *Schriften* (1990), 244 n.2

<sup>622</sup> Clausewitz to Blücher, undated/unsigned, cited by Hahlweg in *Schriften* (1990), 244-45 n.3



ode, which would act as a subtle criticism of what he called the 'impartial cold and bad', i.e. the political game and bureaucracy.<sup>623</sup>

Gneisenau responded that it was not the right time to make such a statement about Scharnhorst.<sup>624</sup> By the middle of May 1817 Clausewitz had completed a first draft of the essay on *Scharnhorst*, which he sent to Gneisenau.<sup>625</sup> He agreed but was convinced it was not the right time to publish: he would save the text. Clausewitz explained that he not trusted their mutual acquaintance Johann Benzenberg (1777-1846), who apparently knew about the text. Benzenberg was a physicist by profession and lived in Düsseldorf, but also a political writer who published the paper *Deutscher Beobachter* in 1817-1818. Benzenberg became known as '*Doktor der Konstitutionen*' and argued for liberal political development.<sup>626</sup> Clausewitz asked Gneisenau in this case to help him with his discretion.

Benzenberg became in due time very unpopular for his severe political criticism of Hardenberg and Friedrich Wilhelm. His concurrent characterisation of Clausewitz is, however, interesting for this analysis. 'Minds like Clausewitz and Schleiermacher will – as every dialectical nature – always overrate and it is healthful to view these dialectical people together and oversee them [their statements] as the Swiss people do from the top of Rigi'.<sup>627</sup>

The draft essay on Scharnhorst was corrected and expanded by Clausewitz, most likely during 1817, but it remained unpublished during his lifetime. The final version was however published in 1832 shortly after his death as part of the first volume of the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*.<sup>628</sup> A journal edited by Leopold Ranke (1795-1886), but founded on the initiative of the Foreign Minister of Prussia, Christian von Bernstorff (1769-1835). His family were closely acquainted with the Clausewitzes in Berlin during the 1820s.

Bernstorff had two political aims with the journal; first, to establish an organ for political defence of the enlightened Prussian bureaucracy against left-wing liberal criticism; secondly, to mark a political distance from the reactionary right wing,

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<sup>623</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 18 March 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 255-60

<sup>624</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 7 April 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 202-5; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 28 April 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 260-66

<sup>625</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz near after 14 May 1817, and the draft text on 'Scharnhorst' amended, *Schriften* (1990), 270-72/ 272-88.

<sup>626</sup> Heinz Gollwitzer, 'Benzenberg, Johann Friedrich', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 2 (1955), 60 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119019930.html> accessed 10 September 2011

<sup>627</sup> Johann Friedrich Benzenberg to Gneisenau, 19 May 1817, cited by Hahlweg in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 272 n 7. 'Köpfe wie Clausewitz und Schleiermacher werden – so wie alle dialektischen Naturen – stets überschätzt und es ist heilsam dies dialektische Gewölke so unter sich zu sehen und zu übersehen wie die Schweizerwolken von der Spitze des Rigi.'

<sup>628</sup> Clausewitz [after May 1817], 'Über das Leben und den Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979), 126-38. First published by Leopold Ranke as 'Ueber das Leben und den Charakter von Scharnhorst – Aus dem Nachlasse des General Clausewitz', besonderes abgedruckt aus *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*, Hg. Leopold Ranke (Berlin: 1832), 1-48

pursued by such men as the brothers Gerlach and Joseph von Radowitz.<sup>629</sup> Clausewitz knew these men but had no sympathy with their ideas. The publication of Clausewitz's essay reminded the retired Boyen of his duty and his own piece, which clearly recognized Scharnhorst's achievements for Prussia, was published in 1833.<sup>630</sup> The use of Clausewitz's text indicated appreciation of his political view in a political landscape not so easy to follow.

Clausewitz went on vacation at the end of May 1817 to alleviate his gout, which had never been as bad as now. This time he took the hot baths at Schwalbach and Wiesbaden, some of the oldest spa towns in Europe.<sup>631</sup> He returned in July to accompany the crown prince in inspecting the *General-Kommando*. This was arranged by Gneisenau via Boyen to help Clausewitz to re-establish the relation with the crown prince and by extension with the king. The inspection lasted four weeks from late July, travelling the area of responsibility in the Rhine provinces. The inspection was conducted in a very friendly atmosphere. Clausewitz expressed his liking for the crown prince and his development. Their friendly company was an important step to towards leaving the defection of 1812 behind.

In the late summer of 1817 Clausewitz bumped into Grolman in Cologne and Boyen visited him in Koblenz. Their relations had been quite formal for a while, due to different opinions. Clausewitz now felt happy that these meetings had recaptured some of their old friendship.<sup>632</sup> The Clausewitzes seem to have been more or less constantly short of money. They borrowed from Gneisenau and felt guilty, especially Marie, at having difficulties in paying back.<sup>633</sup> Gneisenau saw an opportunity to get Clausewitz back in Berlin when the *Director der allgemeinen Kriegsschule*, Major-general Boguslawski, died in September 1817. He saw a great need for Clausewitz in Berlin since he was not fully satisfied with Grolman as chief of the general staff and Boyen as minister of war. His letter at the end of September indicated tension in the military leadership as well as his view of Clausewitz's achievements and utility for the army.

Your presence in Berlin could do much good from many other perspectives, your clear view of things and your sharp dialectics which have brought so many *Hauptgrundsätze* of our war construction back into consideration and so practicable to be advocated victoriously. Boyen fences with lowered weapons; what cannot be achieved by cunning, he will not achieve by firmness. Grolman has often fixed ideas, which he obstinately maintains. I have often become furious lately; I have even taken action in his company. He never speaks well of people, he always knows something bad about them; he is the human chronicler of his contemporaries' worst. It often hurts me, how a man of such talent and

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<sup>629</sup> See Georg G. Iggers, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft. Eine Kritik der traditionellen Geschichtsauffassung von Herder bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1971), 95-96

<sup>630</sup> Hermann v. Boyen, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Generals von Scharnhorst und seiner amtlichen Thätigkeit in den Jahren 1808 bis 1813* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1833)

<sup>631</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Wiesbaden 24 June 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 288-90

<sup>632</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 26 August 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 290-95

<sup>633</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 26 September 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 295-99

moral capability could do such an affair driven by so much passion. Regarding the political principles we will probably be determined enemies, for he is trapped in the most blatant *Grundsätzen* of Jacobinism, and would as such be prepared to bloody sacrifice everything, if I approached that [ideal] to mitigate and decline to the right ideas of freedom and be prepared to help everyone in the lower estate, this would arise as a wrongful *Gestalt* of democracy.<sup>634</sup>

Clausewitz responded that he would be glad to come near and work in the close circle of Gneisenau again, but he was pessimistic about his chances of being accepted. Rühle v. Lilienstern had acted as director of studies at the *Allgemeinen Kriegsschule* since 1816. Clausewitz regarded him as more suitable for the position because of his interest in education and the fact that he was already in a senior position at the school.<sup>635</sup> Boyen and Gneisenau perceived a sort of hesitation in Clausewitz's future ambition. He finally expressed a clear desire to leave Koblenz either for the command of a regional *Landwehr* in the Rhine area or for a job in Berlin, but the final choice he entrusted to Gneisenau.<sup>636</sup>

After the Second Treaty of Paris and the outcome of the Congress of Vienna, Prussia's political, military and economic relations with the Rhine provinces were a major political problem, the subject of intense debate. The tour in the provinces conducted by the crown prince along with Clausewitz in the late summer of 1817 was only one among many efforts to increase political power and influence. Berlin was afraid of revolution, and the future constitution was contested. A significant political voice for the Rhine provinces was the Catholic writer and journalist Joseph Görres (1776-1848), who lived in Koblenz and was a member of Gneisenau's round table.

The Görres and Clausewitz families saw each other now and then. Görres had been struck by the movement of democracy after the French Revolution and published political texts, such as the paper *Das rote Blatt*. However he visited Paris in 1799 and became convinced that the democratic ideal had already been lost in France, which

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<sup>634</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmanssdorf 29 September 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 239-45 cf. 244-45. 'Ihre Anwesenheit in Berlin könnte in so manchem andern Betracht viel Gutes stiften, da durch Ihre klare Ansicht der Dinge und ihre scharfe Dialektik so manche Hauptgrundsätze unseres Kriegsgebäudes wider in Erinnerung gebracht und siegreich verfochten werden würden. Boyen ficht mit schwachen Waffen, was nicht mit List zu erstreben ist, wird ihm durch Festigkeit nicht gelingen. Grolmann hat oft starre Ansichten, die er eben so starrsinnig verfocht. An Letzterem werde ich oft irre, sogar wird mir manchmal unheimlich zu Muth in seiner Gesellschaft. Nie spricht er gut von den Menschen, immer weiß er das Schlechte von ihnen zu erzählen; er ist die Menschgewordene Aegerkronik seiner Zeitgenossen. Es thut mir oft weh, wie ein Mann von solchen Talenten und solcher moralischen Tüchtigkeit ein solches Geschäft mit so viel Liebe treiben kann. In Betreff der politischen Grundsätze werden wir wahrscheinlich entschiedene Gegner werden, denn er ist in den krassesten Grundsätzen des Jacobinismus befangen, und würde solchen alles blutig aufopfern, der ich hingegen zu milden und gerechten Ideen der Freiheit mich neige und bereit bin, alles niedertreten zu helfen, was von Demokratismus in widerrechtlicher Gestalt sich erheben wollte.'

<sup>635</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 12 November/11 December 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 302-7

<sup>636</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 30 December 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 310-13

evoked his later contempt for Napoleon. Görres had started to publish the paper *Rheinischer Merkur* in January 1814 to combat French preponderance. It rapidly became so influential that Napoleon labelled it 'the Fifth Great Power'. Blücher's staff fed information on the war effort directly to this paper during the last campaigns, which contributed to boosting public moral.<sup>637</sup> Napoleon was otherwise known for making the best use of modern propaganda.

After the war Görres advocated harsh peace terms for France and a change in Prussia's constitution. These demands made Hardenberg warn him in late 1815 to moderate his language. The liberal political tone of the paper became unacceptable and a cabinet order was issued in early January 1816 to abolish it. Görres was also relieved of his duty as regional director of education. His political motivation nurtured a belief in a united Germany based on Catholic democratic principles.

Clausewitz seems to have kept their relation on a fairly neutral basis, since he realized they had different political views.<sup>638</sup> When Hardenberg was to visit the Rhine provinces in early 1818, still subject to political tension, he was advised by Gneisenau to speak to Clausewitz; as one of the most astute political observers and as a fully trustworthy man. He sent Hardenberg some of Clausewitz's recent letters to indicate his current political view of the provinces.<sup>639</sup> In the most recent one he had, for example, severely criticized the right of Görres and others to address the Government directly, circumventing the press as media for public political debate.<sup>640</sup>

A more detailed evaluation of Görres was sent to Gneisenau a couple of weeks later. It is not clear whether this text was connected to Hardenberg's visit or just a coincidence.<sup>641</sup> Gneisenau found the evaluation so interesting that he saw the need to inform Boyen, who informed the king. Clausewitz stated frankly about Görres: 'In his political principles he is more democrat in himself than a great monarchy can tolerate.'<sup>642</sup> Gneisenau told Marie somewhat later that Clausewitz had been alone in raising this political warning about Görres. In Gneisenau's later opinion this event finally scattered the subtle royalist suspicion against Clausewitz and himself that they secretly pursued revolutionary ideas.<sup>643</sup>

Hardenberg arrived in the Rhine area in early January 1818 intending to stay two-three months. He brought two close associates, Eichhorn and Rothers, members of the recently-founded *preußischer Staatsrat*. The very length of the *Staatskanzler's* visit

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<sup>637</sup> About Görres see Otto Roegele, 'Görres, Johann Joseph von', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 6 (1964), 532-36 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11854019X.html> accessed 15 September 2011

<sup>638</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 18 March 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 255-60, cf. 259

<sup>639</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, 25 November 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 267-69

<sup>640</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 12 November 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 302-5, cf. 303-4

<sup>641</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 11 December 1817, with the amended text 'Ueber Görres', *Schriften* (1990), 305-07/307-09

<sup>642</sup> Clausewitz [11 December 1817], 'Ueber Görres', *Schriften* (1990), 307

<sup>643</sup> Gneisenau to Marie, Berlin 12 October 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 344-46

indicated the level of political problems at stake. Clausewitz discussed the visit and the political problem of the Rhine frontier in a long letter to Gröben in early January.

He feared Boyen would get too much influence over the king when Hardenberg was away from Berlin: 'Everything in Berlin is drawn from the fear of revolution.' The highest wisdom was to expect the worst, which made every political analysis exaggerated and out of step with reality. Hardenberg's merit lay in his ability to compromise and ameliorate the effect of this pre-conception, according to Clausewitz.<sup>644</sup> Görres was to continue his political agitation in 1819 by publishing the highly controversial text '*Teutschland und die Revolution*', which led to a warrant for his arrest being issued. He managed to escape from Prussia for exile in French Strasbourg without being caught.

In a short memorandum in January 1818 Clausewitz analysed a political proposition from Friedrich von Motz (1775-1830) to exchange territories between the German states. Motz had been engaged in the organisation of the *Landwehr* and worked since 1816 in *Regierungsbezirk Erfurt*, part of the regional administration of Sachsen. His proposition sought to create a better geographical coherence of Eastern and Western Prussia, in addition to increase national spirit.<sup>645</sup> The purpose of Clausewitz's evaluation is unclear. It may have been related to Hardenberg's temporary presence in the Rhine provinces. However, the memorandum addressed defence and military communications from a more political perspective. The conclusion was that the scheme suggested by Motz was a chimera with no political or military value for Prussia.<sup>646</sup>

Clausewitz's political loyalty to the king was far more important for promotion than his military scientific ability, as Gneisenau explained. Friedrich Wilhelm had asked whether young officers could be entrusted to Clausewitz and whether he was a member of any new republican party that threatened the throne. Gneisenau had assured the king that Clausewitz was a monarchist and hated '*Jacobinischen Umtriebe*', secret Jacobin movements.<sup>647</sup> The king was now obviously convinced of Clausewitz's reliability. Gneisenau told Clausewitz on 7 May 1818 that he had been accepted as administrative director in Berlin after the late Bouguslawski.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Bonn 4/Koblenz 8 January 1818, *Schriften* (1979), 253-58. First published from Gröben's Nachlaß as an amended text to Eberhard Kessel, 'Zu Boyens Entlassung', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 175 (München: Oldenbourg, 1953), 41-54

<sup>645</sup> Stefan Hartmann, 'Motz, Friedrich', in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 18 (1997), S. 228-30 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119046547.html> accessed 15 September 2011

<sup>646</sup> Clausewitz [20 January 1818], 'Über den Gedanken eines ländertauschs zur Verbindungen der ost- und Westmasse der Preußischen Monarchie nach den Befreiungskriegen.', *Schriften* (1979), 265-74

<sup>647</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 23 February/29 March 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 292-93/299-300

<sup>648</sup> About Clausewitz's political views compare Rothfels, 'Einleitung', Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1922), VII-XXXIV; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 255-71, 286-306 ; C.B.A. Behrens, 'Which Side Was Clausewitz On?', *The New York Review of Books* (14 October 1976), 41-43; Peter Paret, 'Die

This position was far below Clausewitz's competence in Boyen's opinion, who promised to look for more influential work for him.<sup>649</sup> Clausewitz was very happy for promotion but afraid he would lose his position on the general staff. In that case he could end up in an army corps and stand out as a half-disabled soldier due to his illness.<sup>650</sup> Hake was surprised by the quick decision and felt guilty. He had informed Boyen of Clausewitz's latest period of gout and believed this had given a false impression of disability. Hake was never told the whole story and Clausewitz merely stated that he was satisfied with the new desk job in Berlin.<sup>651</sup> His health was actually better than it had been for a long time.

In early June 1818 Clausewitz fulfilled another diplomatic mission to the *Deutsche Bund* in Frankfurt. Gneisenau related this task to the affairs of the *Staatsrat* and estimated the duration to mid-July.<sup>652</sup> He had proposed that Clausewitz should act as deputy to Major-general Wolzogen; Prussia's permanent envoy to the Military Commission of the *Bund*. But Wolzogen was very ill at the moment and could not fulfil the mission. Clausewitz's task was obviously sensitive since Gneisenau stated it was not suitable to write about. He added that the *Staatkanzler* was impressed by Clausewitz and fully trusted him. Gneisenau regarded this event as a career opportunity for Clausewitz.<sup>653</sup> However, Wolzogen recovered quickly so in the end the task became smaller and shorter than expected.<sup>654</sup>

The political-military topic of the day was otherwise the tricky question of a federal German military constitution.<sup>655</sup> Gneisenau was told in March 1818 that the diversity of political interests made the propositions before the *Deutsche Bund* less militarily potent. Clausewitz's criticism of the federal military constitution in March 1818 resembled ideas put forward in book 3 of *Vom Kriege*. In his opinion a legislated federal army in peacetime hampered the possibility to muster all available German forces in time of war due to the nature of the differing political interests. He developed further arguments during the spring of 1818 against the idea of a permanent federal army in the text *Deutsche Militär Verfassung*, which was written in French.<sup>656</sup>

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politischen Ansichten von Clausewitz', *Freiheit ohne Krieg? Beiträge zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorie von Carl von Clausewitz* (Bonn: Dümmler, 1980), 333-48

<sup>649</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 7 May 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 312-13

<sup>650</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 May 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 336-38

<sup>651</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 20 May 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 338-39

<sup>652</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 21 May 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 314-16

<sup>653</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 21 May 1818, cited by Hahlweg from Gneisenau's Nachlaß A27 in *Schriften* (1990), 340 n.2

<sup>654</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 14 June 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 339-42; Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 27 June 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 325-26

<sup>655</sup> See Friedrich Meinecke, 'Chapter 3 Bundeskriegsverfassung', *Das Leben des Generalfeldmarschall Hermann von Boyen*, Vol 2/2 (Stuttgart: Göttschen Buchhandlung, 1896-99), 271-93

<sup>656</sup> Clausewitz, [undated & unsigned manuscript – March-June 1818?], 'Deutsche Militär Verfassung', *Schriften* (1990), 1141-51; translated in Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, 304-12. Paret & Moran noted internal evidence to date the manuscript. Clausewitz changed a

The graduation into single and double contingents suggested by some appears no good to me, the strategic Reserves [cf. VK III-13], and that means a successive use of the forces in strategy, appear against the nature of war [cf. next chapter + VK III-12] it should be considered a necessary evil. Only those not available immediately should be reserves. – I admit, I had thought the entire plan differently. To throw the whole fighting power of Germany into one *Bundesheer* [Federal Army] *une et indivisible* as Weiland [<sup>657</sup>] miscalled the French republic appears to me against the concept of sovereign states...Much better is however the joining of the entire fighting mass in one army; the defence system of Germany is thus hewn out of one piece; but to me it appears not appropriate to nature; Germany is and remains a federation of sovereign states, which one can no less treat as the federation of federal provinces as all these states are monarchies.<sup>658</sup>

His military view was grounded in the political view of the German states as political sovereigns with their individual political interests. Clausewitz's concept '*Ökonomie der Kräfte*', i.e. economy of forces, as stated in Book 3 chapter fourteen, was based on the purposeful use of all forces. To remove the individual political space around military operations implied that forces would be held back or not raised. The same understanding of political nesting was continued in another undated and unpublished manuscript entitled *Deutsche Streitkräfte*, which addressed the problem of command structure for a Federal German Army.<sup>659</sup> The wider interest of these texts is his frank explanation of circumstances as the motor of policy-making as well as military arrangements, which underpinned strategy in real life. The standpoint visualizes indeed the political and military pragmatism that underlay his theorizing of strategy.

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word in the opening part from 'proposed' to 'agreed to' based on a political agreement made in April 1818. This implies the text was at least drafted before this date. It should be viewed together with the letter to Gneisenau on 15 March 1818. The international language of diplomacy was French, which may in fact indicate a formal connection to *Deutsche Bund*, however without further evidence.

<sup>657</sup> Carl Ferdinand Weiland (1782-1847) was a well known German cartographer from Weimar that also wrote about politics.

<sup>658</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31, cf. 330-31. 'Die von einigen vorgeschlagene Abstufung von einfachen und doppelten Kontingenten scheint mir nicht gut, den strategischen Reserven d.h. ein successiver Gebrauch der Kräfte in der der Strategie scheint gegen die Natur des Krieges, sollte als ein nothwendiges Uebel angesehen werden. Nur das sollte Reserve seyn, was im ersten Augenblick nicht zu beschaffen ist. – Ich gestehe, daß ich mir den ganzen Plan anderes gedacht hatte. Die ganze Streitkraft Deutschlands in ein Bundesheer zu werfen *une et indivisible* wie Weiland die französische Republik sich nannte scheint mir gegen den Begriff souveräner Staaten...- Viel vollkommener ist freilich die Vereinigung der ganzen Streit Masse in einer Armee; das Verteidigungssystem Deutschlands ist so aus einem Stück geschnitten; aber sie scheint mir nicht Natur gemäß; Deutschland ist und bleibt eine Föderation von souverainen Staaten, die man um so weniger wie den Verband vereinigter Provinzen behandeln kann als diese Staaten sämtlich monarchisch sind.'

<sup>659</sup> Clausewitz [March-June 1818? non-published manuscript], '*Deutsche Streitkräfte*'; cited in Hahlweg, *Clausewitz Soldat-Politiker-Denker*, 48

I therefore believe it is absolutely necessary to abandon to the force of circumstances, the interests of the moment, the innumerable constellations of chance under whose influence every act of human history is made and accomplished – I say it is wise to abandon to these living and active forces the formulation of plans, the choice of means, and the various parts that go into the machinery of war... I am therefore utterly convinced that nothing would be better than to suspend all arrangements for the disposition of Germany's armed forces until war begins, to make arrangements according to specific conventions and treaties at the moment of outbreak – such as worked quite smoothly in practice in 1814 and 1815 – and leave to Germany's princes the best disposition of their armies during peacetime and up to the conclusion of these conventions.<sup>660</sup>

Clausewitz travelled to England for reasons unknown shortly after the mission to Frankfurt.<sup>661</sup> At least, he visited Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was Prussian ambassador in London. Humboldt had more or less been forced away from Berlin due to political conflicts. On his way to London he had made a break in Koblenz and visited Clausewitz for eight days in September 1817.<sup>662</sup> Humboldt noted in his diary that he had dinner with Clausewitz and seven other people at his home on Monday evening 22 June 1818. The dinner was however short since the host went away to spend the evening with Lady Jersey.<sup>663</sup> That day was Humboldt's birthday but he does not mention Clausewitz's visit to his wife.<sup>664</sup> Apparently, the purpose was not just a friendly visit. What he actually did in London and how long he stayed remain unclear. Back in Koblenz he went on vacation and spent the whole of July in Emser Bad to cure his gout.

A military celebration was held in Berlin in the middle of September with Tsar Alexander present among others. Clausewitz was actually promoted to *Generalmajor* on 19 September 1818, after being instructed by the king to act at short notice as military commandant for the impending conference of the Great Powers in Aachen.<sup>665</sup> The promotion had been delayed but he had made general at the age of 38, which was relatively rather good.<sup>666</sup> Clausewitz and Marie left Koblenz for Aachen in early

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<sup>660</sup> Clausewitz, [undated & unsigned manuscript – March-June 1818?], 'Deutsche Militär Verfassung', *Schriften* (1990), 1141-51. Cited from the translation in Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, 304-12, cf. 308-09

<sup>661</sup> Paret suggested that Clausewitz made a first step to examine the possibilities of succeeding Humboldt in London, which cannot be confirmed. See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 270

<sup>662</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 26 September 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 295-99, cf. 298

<sup>663</sup> Wilhelm v. Humboldt diary entry for 20 June 1818, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Gesammelte Schriften*, Hg. Albert Letzmann Vol 15 Tagebücher II (Berlin: Behr, 1918), 498. See also two lists including Clausewitz's name on 513, 515

<sup>664</sup> Wilhelm v. Humboldt to Caroline v. Humboldt, London 23 June 1818, *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in Ihren Briefen*, Hg. Anna v. Sydow (Berlin: Mittler, 1913), 231-35

<sup>665</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 19 September 1818, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 339-40

<sup>666</sup> *Generalmajor* became in comparison Scharnhorst (1807) at 52; Gneisenau (1813) at 53; Müffling (1813) at 38; Grolmann (1814) at 37; Boyen (1814) at 43; Lilienstern (1820) at 40;



September. The Congress of Aachen, or *Aix-la-Chapelle*, took place between 29 September and 21 November. The major powers Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia gathered to decide upon the withdrawal of occupation forces from France and other political issues to promote future peace. Clausewitz was a clever man in Hardenberg's opinion but he regarded anyway his successor in Koblenz, Colonel Pfuël, as the most suitable for the position as director of the *Kriegsschule*.<sup>667</sup>

The promotion pleased Clausewitz and he hoped the king's grudge was finally a thing of the past. He found the task at the conference easy, mostly routine regarding guard and patrol duties.<sup>668</sup> His health was good and he felt like he had in his twenties; he put down his 'rebirth' to the baths in Ems rather than happiness and better conditions of life. He observed that the diplomats around the inner core of monarchs had very little influence, approximately equal to his as Commandant of the Guard.<sup>669</sup>

He met Wilhelm Humboldt briefly but found a closer friend in Prussia's new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christian *Graf* von Bernstorff (1769-1835). The two met regularly during the conference and would later continue their friendship in Berlin. Clausewitz also observed the successive weakening of Hardenberg, physically as well as politically, due to the turmoil of political life in Prussia. Marie and Clausewitz returned to Koblenz after the conference to prepare their transport and expected to arrive in Berlin on 20 December 1818, which they looked forward to.<sup>670</sup>

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This chapter has pointed to Clausewitz's broad practical understanding of strategy and military preparations in their political, social and economic context. He was hardly a naive military idealist, lost in books as some imply. The chapter explained the tricky transition to peace in France and the visit to Le Mans, when he gained a new perspective on the war in the Vendée between royalists and revolutionaries. Clausewitz's striking observations on the risk of fickle counter-actions and effects of cruelty were pointed out as important to his future way of theorizing strategy. His criticism of the lack of political vision in Prussia's Headquarters in pursuing a less noble posture as victor was noted in conjunction. A perspective vastly overlooked in the literature. In addition, his pragmatic scope of prudent military planning and political framing of a potential *Bundesheer* was observed.

Altogether Clausewitz's deeds in 1815-1818 support the conclusion of the previous chapter: basically, we should understand Clausewitz as a clever pragmatist, who also possessed and developed the gift to think theory appositely.

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<sup>667</sup> Hardenberg to Fürst Wittgenstein, 4 September 1818, cited in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 271, n.37

<sup>668</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 1 October 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 346-50

<sup>669</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 25 October 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 350-54

<sup>670</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 7 November 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 356-59

## 7. THE SEEDS

### DISTILLING THE SYSTEM OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT

This scholarly strategy, from which we have already experienced several unsuccessful systems in quite a short time; well it is not ancient. – No traces thereof among the Greeks and Romans or in the Middle East. No trace in the Thirty Years' War. The armies everywhere followed the most natural way, sketched out by this or that dire necessity, more or less courage and so on – one sought out the armies, met and decided; this was in the *Ordnung* [order], or one tried to live off the enemy, and that was all. Only since the wars of Louis XIV when the *engineering principle* [of war] gained the upper hand, did strategy grow stiff in its own rigid form. War became, from that time until the French Revolution, conventional, diplomatic and not of the people [*unvolksmäßig*].<sup>671</sup>

This chapter outlines the post-war start of Clausewitz's writing. He made a historical interpretation, distilling a dichotomy, somewhat simplified, of natural war and conventional war to explain stagnation and progression of warlike events. This insight made him believe that he had found the root of the poverty of predominant military thought, which he labelled pejoratively as 'scholarly strategy'. He told Gneisenau of his analysis in March 1818, as indicated in the quote above. Clausewitz argued that the 'engineering principle' of war had appeared under the mighty regime of Louis XIV. This principle had underpinned the forming of 'scholarly strategy', which had nurtured a unilateral theoretical belief in *Kriegskunst*, i.e. war as an artistic performance, as a matter of foremost ingenious military engineering and design.

This had caused the natural or primordial way of war to disappear, or to be overshadowed, in military thought. Clausewitz recalled, thus constructed an *Urbestimmung* of war, i.e. primordial determination of war, hence the warlike element,

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<sup>671</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31, cf. 327. 'Diese gelehrte Strategie, in der wir doch nun in einem ganz kurzen Zeitraum schon mehrere verunglückte Systeme Erlebt haben, ist ja nicht uralte. - Keine Spur davon ist bei den Griechen und Römern oder im Morgenlande, keine Spur im Mittel-Alter, keine Spur im Dreißigjährige Kriege. Ueberall folgte man mit den Heeren den Naturlichen Weg, welchen dieses oder jenes dringende Bedürfnis, mehr oder weniger Muth u.s.w. vorzeichneten – man suchte sich mit den Heeren, traf sich und entschied; das war in der Ordnung, oder man suchte auf Unkosten des Feindes zu leben, und das war es auch. Nur seit in den Kriegen Ludwigs des 14ten das Ingenieur Princip die Oberhand gewann, erstarrte die Strategie in den steifen Formen desselben. Der Krieg wurde von da an und bis zur französische Revolution, konventionell, diplomatisch und unvolksmäßig.' (my emphasize)

as a simple swift bloody quest for decision as a basis for his ideas. Clausewitz's understanding of successive intellectual frameworks resembled the modern term paradigm. Basically, his analysis illustrates the principle of history as effect. The dichotomy was later revisited and applied as the 'double way of war' in 1826-1827 to cover the conceptual gap between attack and defence.

The chapter analyses first, Clausewitz's realization of the root of the poverty of current military thought, which seemingly inspired him to write, secondly, his practical motives for writing a piece on strategy. Thirdly, the chapter analyses the framing of his initial Small Volume on strategy and the important essay problematizing strategy between 'stagnation and progress in the great warlike events' sent to Gneisenau in March 1817. Ten important aspects are distilled, which help to understand Clausewitz's system and later writings. Finally, Clausewitz's recovery of the *Urbestimmung* of war for strategic thought is briefly contextualized. In brief, then, the chapter outlines the theoretical foundation of the future work.

## UNCOVERING THE ROOT OF FALSE MILITARY THEORY

It is clear that Clausewitz distilled two ways of war through historical interpretation in Koblenz. His dichotomy between conventional and natural war induced two major ways of thinking strategy. The former was more narrow and restricted, 'war by counterweight' regulated by the European *Gleichgewicht*, i.e. equilibrium - balance of power. Natural war was more warlike and carried forward by committed citizens. He identified the start of the conventional way of thinking war after the Thirty Years' War during the reign of Louis XIV. The French Revolution once more evoked war in the natural sense. Clausewitz had, as explained earlier, faintly described this in the amended note to the study of the Vendée written as a reflection when he was there in the summer of 1815 or somewhat later in 1816.

Seemingly, Clausewitz started to study the wars on the French border and the military history of Flanders probably to improve and contextualise his daily work of war planning in Koblenz. As shown, his correspondence revealed that he started to explore the area of responsibility through staff rides not later than September 1816.<sup>672</sup> The literature has no clear interpretation of his studies of the Dutch War of Independence 1568-1606 or on the wars of Louis XIV, including the campaigns of Marshal Turenne (1611-75) and Marshal Luxemburg (1628-95).<sup>673</sup> It seems most likely these texts were written between the spring of 1816 and 1818. In them Clausewitz used primarily older sources, which helped him to contextualize his own understanding and develop a more holistic view of war. This implied a twofold interpretation of the conduct of war. He studied for example Friedrich Wilhelm v. Zanthier's work on Turenne and made notes,

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<sup>672</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 24 September 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 226-28

<sup>673</sup> Clausewitz [1816-18], 'Erster Abschnitt - Übersicht der niederländischen Unabhängigkeitskriege von 1568-1606'; 'Zweiter Abschnitt - Übersicht der Kriege unter Ludwig XIV', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 107-52; Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-1817], 'Einige Bemerkungen zum Spanischen Erbfolgekriege bei Gelegenheit der Briefe der Madame Maintenon an die Prinzessin des Ursins', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 273-80; Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18?], 'Turenne', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 152-228; Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18], 'Die Feldzüge Luxemburgs in Flandern von 1690-1694', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 229-72

which constituted part one of the text on that marshal.<sup>674</sup> Zanthier had in addition translated *Chevalier Jean De Beaurain's* work on Marshal Luxembourg, which Clausewitz also referred to.<sup>675</sup>

In these and other texts he recognized that the natural and people-driven approach to war had disappeared after the Thirty Years' War. This had caused the conduct of war to be based more on conventions and restricted due to political considerations and belief in moral progress. The imbalance that occurred through the French Revolution had been disastrous, leading to a series of defeats during the Revolutionary Wars and finally Jena in 1806. When studying the wars of Louis XIV he came across the correspondence between the king's second wife Madame de Maintenon (1635-1719) and Marie Anne de La Trémoille (1642-1722), Princesse des Ursins at the Spanish court during the Spanish War of Succession 1701-1714. The correspondence revealed that war had been considered, politically, very differently from Clausewitz's Prussian view of war as a matter of life and death.<sup>676</sup> The amended note to the study of the Vendée should be read in conjunction to these studies.

That is because the conditions of the French state of that time considered war, itself most serious and threatening, seemingly as a subordinate matter, not worthy the king's personal occupation, in this respect more of a glorification of his governance like using a luxury product [*Laurusartikel*]. That war could have a great impact on the state, that it could totally drag a state into its whirlpool, deciding its being or not being, this one had of course observed in other states, but the dimensions of the French monarchy and the limited nature of war at that time [*der beschränkten Natur des damaligen Krieges*] together engendered such a condition, that it made people think they could presuppose future possibilities. The nature of these wars prompted this view and this view reacted back onto the nature of war.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm v. Zanthier, *Feldzüge des Bicomte Turenne Marchal General des Königs von Frankreich aus dem ächtesten Urkunden* (Leipzig: Weidmanns, 1779)

<sup>675</sup> Jean De Beaurain, *Feldzüge des Marchalls von Luxemburg oder Militärgeschichte von Flandern in dem Jahren 1690-1694*, translated from French (Potsdam: Horvath, 1781)

<sup>676</sup> Paret & Moran dated this text to 1826 or later depending on some letters Clausewitz mentioned were not present in every edition of this well known work. They interpreted the edition to be the first to include these letters was first published in Paris 1826, which made them to argue Clausewitz had written these notes sometime after 1826, see Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, 15-18. This dating seems however unlikely because it correspond to the historical interpretation Clausewitz expressed in other texts from 1817-18. I have not had the possibility to review the many editions of Maintenon's and Ursin's correspondence. It seems after all more likely there was an earlier edition of the correspondence, which included the letters Clausewitz referred to. The historical understanding expressed in the notes was not new to Clausewitz in 1826-1827, but underpinned his distinction of natural and conventional war as explicated in 1816-1818.

<sup>677</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-17], 'Einige Bemerkungen Zum Spanischen Erbfolgekrieg bei Gelegenheit der Briefe der Madame von Maintenon an die Prinzessin des Ursinns' in Clausewitz, *Werke*, Vol 9/10, 276-80, cf.279-80. 'Es liegt darin, daß für die damaligen Verhältnisse des Französischen Staates der Krieg, selbst der sehr ernstliche und bedrohliche, als

The powerful Louis XIV had regarded war as of minor importance and not worthy of his full attention. He had utilized war more as a luxury product (*Laurusartikel*) to display his power, in Clausewitz's opinion. He observed that the ruler's considerations of his war were starting to form a new understanding of the nature of war itself. The evident preponderance of France as the major power of continental Europe had made people believe that outcomes and the future could be presupposed, because the issue of the sheer survival of a state was never in the range of expected outcomes.

This political view of war had caused the engineering principle of war to assume a larger place in military thought. This had made war a delicate matter of *Kriegskunst* and design rather than of natural fighting for security and wellbeing, as the opening quote to this chapter indicates. The wars of Louis XIV were in Clausewitz's opinion full of immediate pleading (*Vorschieben*) and tasks submitted (*Vorlegen*) to the commanders. Thus for example the king had instructed Turenne literally to cover the border to the Netherlands, which had more or less become a principle of honour. Turenne was passive (*auf der Lauer* – cf. stagnation) most of the time during the campaign of 1674, even if his correspondence displayed that he was ready to fight in a larger sector between the Maas, the Mosel and the Rhine.

The strategic conditions of that time were of course much smaller than under Napoleon. Turenne had in fact a very limited possibility and perhaps also no understanding, to follow up and exploit advantages to the very utmost. The mechanical leverage of utilizing an advantage to the utmost in the game of success represented in Clausewitz's time a great economy of force. This was a standpoint he tried to theorize in the coming years, but concluded regarding Turenne's time that:

Following-up an advantage in one direction, repayment of evil with greater [c.f. *Wechselwirkung* and the note on the Vendée], returned to the enemy at a different point – this mechanical leverage that contains such an economy of forces, was, under the narrow circumstances of the armies of the time, unheard of, perhaps often impossible, but perhaps also too little attempted ... Yet it must also be said that the heart of the Austrian monarchy was far distant and hard to hit, that the Dutch republic was well equipped, and that reprisals against the minor earl did not always prompt much activity.<sup>678</sup>

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eine untergeordnete Sache erscheint, des Königs persönlicher Thätigkeit nicht würdig, als insofern sie zu Seiner Verherrlichung, zu der Seiner Regierung, wie ein *Laurusartikel* angewendet werden könnte. Daß der Krieg eine überwiegende Gewalt über den Staat bekommen, dass er ihn ganz seinen Strudel hineinziehen, über Sein und Nichtsein entscheiden könne: das hatte man natürlich an anderen Staaten wohl gesehen, aber bei der Größe der französischen Monarchie und der beschränkten Natur des damaligen Krieges war zwischen beiden ein solches Verhältniß, daß es seinem Menschen einfiel, hier eine Möglichkeit vorauszusetzen. Die Natur des Kriegs brachte diese Ansicht hervor, und diese Ansicht wirkte auf die Natur des Krieges wieder zurück.'

<sup>678</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18], 'Turenne', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 152-228, cf. 203. 'Das Verfolgen des Vorteils in einer Richtung, das Vergelten des Übels durch ein Stärkers, welches dem Feinde

Hence war was never about striking to the heart of enemy power. Clausewitz interpreted the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more or less as armed peace negotiations (*bewaffnete Friedens Unterhandlung*); as for example in his essay 'On progression and stagnation in great warlike events' sent to Gneisenau in March 1817. The first battle was warlike and bloody, which turned the rest of the war cold, with both parties waiting for an opportunity or for the other side to make a mistake.<sup>679</sup>

The small circumstances made war conventional and limited. Later generations had merely adopted this art and tried to conceptualize *Kriegskunst* to perfection as a substitute for warlike energy. He characterised the last and best-known campaign of Turenne and Montecuculi as glorified in military literature and a model for all '*hochausgebildeten Kriegführung*', i.e. cultivated academic conduct of war.<sup>680</sup> These accounts had made war appear more artistic and less warlike. A sound philosophy of strategy, i.e. a theory of war, could however never rely on conventions of small strategic circumstances that placed arbitrary *Kriegskunst* higher than basic warlike strife. The same type of historical interpretation was outlined in the Scharnhorst memorial text. The French Revolution had restored the horrible 'warlike element' to European politics.

The French had with their revolutionary means attacked the old instrument of warfare as if with aqua fortis [*Scheidewasser*]: They had released the dreadful the element of war [cf. the warlike element] from its old diplomatic and financial bonds: as a consequence thereof war now strides on based on raw violence, rolling forward with him an enormous mass of power and one could not observe anything more than rubble of the old *Kriegskunst* on one side and enormous success on the other, and that without one being able clearly to distinguish a new system of conducting war, that is to say new ways of shrewdness, new positive forms of using forces.<sup>681</sup>

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auf einem anderen Punkts zurückgeben wird, dieses mechanische Hebelspiel des Erfolgs, worin eine so große Ökonomie der Kräfte liegt, war in den beegten Verhältnissen der damaligen Kriegsmacht etwas Unerhörtes, vielleicht oft etwas Unmögliches, vielleicht aber auch etwas zu wenig Versuchtes...Man muß aber auch sagen, daß das Herz der österreichischen Monarchie weit entfernt und schwer zu treffen, das der holländischen Republik wohl geharnischt war und daß die Vergeltung an den kleinen Fürsten nicht immer viel Wirksamkeit versprach.'

<sup>679</sup> Clausewitz [4 March 1817], 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 253

<sup>680</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18], 'Turenne', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 218

<sup>681</sup> Clausewitz [after May 1817], 'Über das Leben und den Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979), 126-38, cf. 228. 'Die Franzosen hatten mit ihren Revolutionären Mitteln das alte Instrument der Kriegführung wie mit Scheidewasser angriffen: sie hatten das furchtbare Element des Krieges aus seinen alten diplomatischen und finanziellen Banden losgelassen: er schritt nun mit seiner rohen Gewalt einher, wälzte eine ungeheure Masse von Kräften mit sich fort und man sah nichts als Trümmer der alten Kriegskunst auf der einen Seite und unerhörte Erfolge auf der anderen, ohne dass man dabei ein neues System der Kriegführung, d.h. neue

The old instrument of warfare based on norms and conventions had been attacked by the Frenchmen with their revolutionary means. War had in this process been ripped loose from traditional diplomatic and financial bonds. The French Revolutionary Army had managed to employ war based on the 'warlike element' as an invincible roller of violence preceding them. This had produced enormous success on their side and scattered the old conventional, systematic *Kriegskunst* on the other. In Clausewitz's opinion the imbalance had occurred without the invention of any new strategic systems, as proposed by Bülow's and similar accounts: the difference was to be found in the warlike energy released by armed and committed people.

The text on *Scharnhorst* revealed that Clausewitz actually regarded war as stripped from conventions for the time being. The old wars on the French border and even the military memories, like Puysegur, from these wars were not a subject for Clausewitz's criticism, which was reserved for the later '*die Theoretiker, die vermeintlichen Gesetzgeber*', the military academics that had conceptualized experience way too far by pure speculation. They had deduced false systems that had turned into general normative laws of how to think about the conduct of war up to his time. The theorists had the impossible ambition to construct general frameworks and to deliver instructions for all times and all occasions. All of these had been scattered by the recent wars, large and natural, in Clausewitz's opinion.

In 1817 Clausewitz divided recent theorists into two categories. The first type was exemplified by his old theoretical target A.D.H Bülow and his geometrical system of strategy, which he had polished with some mathematical elegance as a 'true charlatan'. The second type originated from Mathieu Dumas (1753-1837), one of Napoleon's division generals and consul of Naples. He had had propounded some higher standpoints regarding terrain, which had given rise to a new system based on half-true and half-false substitutes. The *Kriegskunst* appeared as a picturesque analogy to geology. Later Clausewitz labelled this type of concept, such as *Schlüssel des Landes*, i.e. key terrain, 'the parade horse of military history'.<sup>682</sup>

Jomini had staked everything on a geometrical system of inner lines uniting all forces at a decisive point. Jomini's geometrical system was a contradiction to Bülow but nevertheless derived from the same type of false understanding of war.<sup>683</sup> Clausewitz's objections in 1817 were quite similar to those expressed about the tiny prospect of developing abstract *Grundsätze* of strategy in 1808.<sup>684</sup> Clausewitz's pragmatic conviction was that every great general followed the simple and natural way that every individual situation offered.

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Wege der Klugheit, neue positive Formen im Gebrauch der Kräfte, deutlich unterscheiden hätte.'

<sup>682</sup> See Clausewitz [1825-7], '*Schlüssel des Landes*', *Vom Kriege* 6:23, 766-70

<sup>683</sup> Clausewitz [after May 1817], '*Leben und Charakter von Scharnhorst*', *Schriften* (1979), 229

<sup>684</sup> Clausewitz [1808], '*Strategie – 29. Über abstrakte Grundsätze der Strategie*', *Schriften* (1979), 46-49,

Clausewitz described in the text on *Scharnhorst* the period following the revolution as a busy one for the *Systemmacher*, the military academics and makers of prescriptive systems of *Kriegskunst*. They had to reconceptualise their models all the time when 'war itself' was standing by the teacher's desk and lecturing. When war stripped of conventional bonds was handed over to Bonaparte it remade itself time after time. The consequence was that the epitome of war of changed consistently. The scale become grander and the performance had no comparison. The root of false military theory and his belief in a sound philosophy of strategy were clearly pinpointed in the piece on Turenne:

If then we in this way, considering all the petty and over-simplified plans of the wars of that time, find the strategic object of this campaign even more petty and oversimplified, if we find that the commander who sought to emulate him showed himself timidly to be more than cautious, we cannot possibly set up the strategic championship beside Montecuculi's, a championship which has so far mostly been ascribed to him quite uncritically and only because in this way the art of the opponent, and at the same time art altogether, might be placed higher. These are false strivings, without sound philosophy which, since they lead the reader into false paths, leave behind an incalculable force and waste of time.<sup>685</sup>

It was not strange in Clausewitz's opinion that these one-sided and fantastic systems found many believers in times of great change and uncertainty, because: 'The spirit of speculation is animated very fast by appearing in the real world; but understanding will always come later; the spirit wishes to be animated, not to wait them out, and not to observe them from every side.'<sup>686</sup> Scharnhorst's great merit had been that he had not been carried away by all these 'horrible systems' and the intellectual whirlpool they caused in every military head. He had recognized the change that was going on and the insufficiency of old habits of thought, but he had tried to develop the new from the old to make the adaption as painless as possible.

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<sup>685</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18], 'Turenne', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 227. 'Wenn wir also auf diese Weise unter allen kleinlichen und verengten Planen der damaligen Kriege, das Strategische Objekt dieses Feldzuges noch besonders kleinlich und einseitig finden, wenn wir finden, daß der Feldherr, welche ihm nachstrebte, sich mehr als behutsam, sich zaghaft dabei gezeigt hat, so können wir unmöglich diesem Feldzuge von Seiten Montecuculi's die Strategische Meisterschaft einräumen, die man ihm meist bisher ohne alle Kritik und bloß deswegen zugewiesen hat, weil dadurch die Kunst des Gegners und somit die Kunst überhaupt höher gestellt werden sollte. Das sind falsche, einer gesunden Philosophie unwürdige Bestrebungen, die, indem sie den Leser auf falsche Wege führen, eine Kraft und Zeitverschwendung verlassen, die gar nicht zu berechnen ist.'

<sup>686</sup> Clausewitz [after May 1817], 'Leben und Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979), 229-30. 'Der Speculationsgeist wird sehr schnell von den Erscheinungen der wirklichen Welt angeregt, aber begreifen lernt er sie immer erst später; er wird zu stark davon angeregt, wartet ihren ruhigen Verlauf nicht ab, und betrachtet sie nicht von allen Seiten.'



In conclusion, we should read Clausewitz's work as a theoretical response to the lack of realism in military thought. The twofold interpretation of war was clear and present in Clausewitz's ideas already in 1816-1818. However, he long chose more or less unilaterally to theoretically develop the doctrine of the warlike element as a theoretical fundament to think strategy properly. The conventional approach was meanwhile often pejoratively labelled as theoretically untrue. The practical use of limited force was however not excluded, if one carefully studies the early manuscripts. To convey the conceptual gap in the midst of offence and defence the twofold conception of war was revisited and clearly explicated as the double way of war in 1826-1827.

#### PRACTICAL MOTIVES – COMBATING THE LACK OF REALISM

Clausewitz's theoretical work had practical motives indeed. He had complained about how military planning and reasoning were done when he sat in new temporary quarters on the Rhine just before Christmas 1814. He was trying to develop options of defence for the new provinces and the western theatre. Gneisenau was told that the making of strategy suffered from continued oscillation, which resembled his complaints in 1804, already quoted.

There was a lack of a commonly accepted view from which to consider and develop strategy and military plans. Clausewitz preferred to approach 'the strategic' from a practical and tangible point of view. He elaborated lines of operations related to larger towns, road-junctions and rivers.<sup>687</sup> Remember also his letter to Gneisenau about twelve months earlier, which had objected strongly to the allied strategic reasoning, the governing 'pseudo-truth', to halt operations at the Rhine.

When Gneisenau after the war evaluated his experience, he concluded that it was neither the war *per se* nor Bonaparte's genius that had been the worst to handle. It had instead been the immense friction in Prussia's political apparatus and high command. The conflicts had not just been personal but even more about basic principles in politics and strategy.<sup>688</sup> Gneisenau complained also after the war about how political matters were settled. They were addressed as private matters and private relations instead of being dealt with according to robust *Grundsätze*. Many intelligent people worked in the state bureaucracy but their efficiency was hampered by frequent internal conflict.<sup>689</sup>

Clausewitz long believed that the warlike element released by the French revolution had come to stay; at least a sound philosophy of thinking strategy properly could not neglect these powers. He would for the next nine years try to develop the logic of the warlike element to circumvent the wishful thinking that rumbled around in conventional military theory. Clausewitz's reasoning emerges at the end of his text on *Turenne*:

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<sup>687</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Kant[onierungs] Quartier Mülheim am Rhein 21 December 1814, *Schriften* (1990), 161-64, cf. 163

<sup>688</sup> Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 10

<sup>689</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 7 April 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 202-05, cf. 202

If we find the campaign of Montecuculi, one of the best commanders, quite unworthy, so also will the attributed standard of Turenne's campaign be somewhat lowered indeed; but anyone with weak fighting power who thwarts the plans of his enemy always maintains an absolute merit, and when we look at the nature of the means the cautious Turenne used, we must say that he achieved his purpose with great *Kunstindustrie* (skill of art). But one must also add that this art was entirely of his time, that it would have been gutted in our wars, as a gallant courtier's rapier by the sword of a knight. – What would Bonaparte have done if he not chosen the highest, what would Blücher have done if he had confronted Turenne with our concepts and habits of war? He would have embroiled him infallibly in complete defeat or utterly in a catastrophe.<sup>690</sup>

A truer understanding of the concept of war, i.e. the warlike element, had at least to underpin Prussia's constitution of war and war preparations. The commander was of course always free to conduct the war and reach his aims in the way he found best for the moment. He must however realize that an enemy fighting with a liberated warlike element and a bold offensive commander was superior to someone pursuing a conventional and limited approach. The conventional approach to the conduct of war developing after the Thirty Years' War was compared to the gallant rapier of a courtier (*der Galanteriedegen eines Hofmannes*) in Clausewitz's interpretation.<sup>691</sup>

The meaning of '*Galanterie*' makes his view even more clear: the daughter of a medieval knight and associated with coquettish love. The association was a mix of a seemingly shining outer and beautiful surface (*scheinbar*) but a less pure and less true inner side (*innere Wesenheit*), described by Montesquieu as: 'One's easy, eternal lies of love'. That means a literary betrayal of grace, beauty and a spirit of being as likable as a rainbow in sunlight; a nimbus, thus something that caught light and transmitted light – hence pet ideas.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1816-18], 'Turenne', *Werke* Vol 9/10, 227-28. 'Finden wir den Feldzug Montecuculi's eines ausgezeichneten Feldherrn ganz unwürdig, so wird freilich dadurch auch das Maaß etwas heruntergesetzt, welches bisher diesem Feldzuge Turennes gegeben worden ist; aber wer mit einer schwächern Streitkraft die Pläne seines Gegners vereitelt, behält immer ein absolutes verdienst, und wenn wir auf die Natur der Mittel sehen, die der vorsichtige Turenne anwandte, so müssen wir aussagen, daß er seinen Zweck mit einer großen Kunstindustrie erreicht hat. Aber man muß auch gleich hinzusetzen, daß diese Kunst durchaus nur die seiner Zeit war, daß sie sich in unseren Kriegen ausgenommen haben würde, wie der Galanteriedegen eines Hofmannes unter Ritterschwertten. – Was würde Bonaparte, oder um nicht grade das höchste zu wählen, was würde Blücher getan haben, wenn er mit unseren Begriffen und Kriegsgewohnheiten Turenne gegenüber getan hätte? Er würde ihn unfehlbar in eine vollkommene Niederlage, oder gar in eine Katastrophe verwickelt haben.'

<sup>691</sup> See also Clausewitz [4 March 1817], 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 253-54

<sup>692</sup> See '*Galanterie*' in *Damen Conversations Lexikon*, Vol 4 (1835), 292-93. [Online version]; URL <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20001732390> accessed 23 January 2012. Montesquieu cited here in German as 'die seine, leichte, ewige Lüge der Liebe.'

Clausewitz's point was obvious, conventional war and ambitious system of *Kriegskunst* may appear beautiful on paper, easy to love, but the way of thinking is fundamentally constituted on inner false premises – not fit to confront changing reality, proven by recent conflicts.<sup>693</sup> He told Gröben just after New Year 1818 about his work to polish others' ideas and how to overcome the immense internal friction in planning war. One 'other' in mind was General Hake, who had as mentioned developed memorandums on war plans more or less in splendid isolation from the rest of the staff, which annoyed his chief of general staff.

Hake was old school, inclined to detail military planning in complicated systems. Seemingly, Clausewitz had now had enough of the poverty of military thought. At this point he held the opinion that, actually, no good military literature on strategy existed. The military memoirs of the Great Captains were biased and completely useless for the serious student of strategy. The old school believed in the supremacy of enigmatic *Kriegskunst* and overlooked the released 'warlike element', which Clausewitz pinpointed as governing of present military conditions.

Otherwise I have to cordially adopt, to use my mind to polish the ideas of others, especially when the great disparity of nature makes the friction far too great. I now feel this more than ever since one starts to occupy oneself with prudent outlines for a case of war. My conviction is that one should finally abandon the way of [strategic] reasoning that is derived from a couple of preconditions, that can neither exhaust the infinite field of possibilities, nor have the slightest inner necessity; every tiny quibble about a previous intentional point projected by reasoning. Their string-thin turnings do not care at all about *the violent element of war* set free; this consideration I have to seal in my soul, it is like a mean coffin, now too narrow, now too broad for the artificially constructed, biased [*ausgezeckte?*] and a faulty system of military memoirs.<sup>694</sup>

The clearest exposition of Clausewitz's strategic point of view with a clear date outside his manuscripts was outlined to Gneisenau on 15 March 1818, cited in the opening of

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<sup>693</sup> In *Vom Kriege* this analogy of sword and rapier appear at least in two passages. See Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Zweck und Mittel im Kriege', *Vom Kriege* 1:2, 230; Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Der Gebrauch der Schlacht', *Vom Kriege* 5:11, 470

<sup>694</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Koblenz 8 January 1818, *Schriften* (1979), 253-58, cf. 257. 'Übrigens habe ich es herzlich statt, meinen Kopf an den Ideen anderer abzuschleifen, besonders wenn eine große Verschiedenheit der Naturen die Friktion gar zu groß macht. Ich fühle das jetzt mehr als je, weil man anfängt, sich mit vorbereitenden Entwürfen für den Fall eines Krieges zu beschäftigen. Die Überzeugung, daß man endlich die Art von Raisonsnements aufgeben sollte, die sich auf ein paar Voraussetzungen stürzen, die das unendliche Feld der Möglichkeiten weder erschöpfen, noch die geringste innere Notwendigkeit haben, jene winzigen spitzfindigeren, auf einen vorher beabsichtigen Punkt hinauf geschobenen Raisonsnements, an deren fadendünne Wendungen sich das jetzt losgelassene gewaltige Element des Krieges im mindesten nicht kehrt; die Überlegung muß ich in mein Inneres verschließen, sie gleicht einer gemeinen Kiste, die bald zu eng und bald zu weit ist für das künstlich gebaute, ausgezeckte und gefeilte Sistem eines militärischen Memoires.' (my emphasize)

this chapter. It was a letter written in easy language and to the point about his basic beliefs regarding strategy and the theoretical implications of present conditions. It is a valuable source for understanding his early starting point and his other more complex texts. The letter basically addressed the plan for defending the western theatre. Clausewitz presented his viewpoint as '*meine natürliche entkünstelte Ansicht*', my natural and artless opinion, thus an opinion not biased of a belief in *Kriegskunst*. He believed his ideas would appeal to very few for the moment but would become the general standard in twenty years' time. He was sure they would be judged either as a striving for modernity, or stubbornness, or just pure ignorance.

Clausewitz rebelled against the '*gelehrte Strategie*', the scholarly strategy that taught the conduct of war according to fixed systems, still the predominant view of strategy. In his opinion this way of thinking was grounded in the 'engineering principle' of war, which had dominated military thought since the time of Louis XIV. This way of thinking strategy had made *der Krieg*, the concept of war, appear less warlike, more conventional, diplomatic and less a matter for the people (*unvolksmäßig*).<sup>695</sup> Gneisenau was clearly told that Turenne's campaign in the Netherlands in 1672 was the starting point for the growing of conventional war and the sweeping theorizing of *Kriegskunst*, which had dominated Prussian military thought.<sup>696</sup> To Gneisenau he ridiculed their common enemy Valentini's recent attempt to defend the old imploding theory by depicting Waterloo as barbarism and an anomaly to proper *Kriegskunst*:

The last war, so gross and natural in all its motions, has overthrown most of all these old attempts at theory, but not swept away the rubble. The theorists know not how they have been converted, they cannot recover from amazement and are most embarrassed – that is to say if they do not do as the chief of the general staff of the 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps [Valentini] does and take the side of emphatic refusal: everything was barbarism and the battle of la Belle Alliance [Waterloo 1815] was in its dispositions so far from the battle of Leuthen [1757], the *Gliedermann* [lay-figure] of tactics. – However, when the Lords Master builders from the guild of the general staff step forth by and by from their workshop and check for themselves the fragments of imploding theories, they find most of it quite good and sound, hack it back into shape a bit and start to build again.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31

<sup>696</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31

<sup>697</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31, cf. 328. 'Der letzte Krieg, so groß und natürlich in seinen Bewegungen hat allen diese alten Theorie-Versuche zwar größtentheils niedergeworfen, aber die Trümmer nicht fortgeschwemmt. Die Theoretiker wissen nicht wie sie bekehrt sind, sie können sich vom Erstaunen noch nicht erholen und sind sehr verlegen – wenn sie nicht etwa wie der Chef des Generals Stabs von 4ten Armee-Corps [Valentini] die entschiedene Partie nehmen zu sagen: das wären alles Barbarismen und die Schlacht von Belle alliance [Waterloo 1815] von aller Dispositionen grade so weit entfernt wie sie es von der Schlacht von Leuthen [1757] ist, dem Gliedermann der Taktik. – Aber es treten die Herrn Baumeister von der Generalstabs-Innung nach und nach aus ihrer Werkstatt heraus und sehen sich die Fragmente der eingefallenen Theorien an, da finden sie denn das meiste noch ganz gut und unversehrt, schnitzeln es ein wenig zurecht und fangen von neuem an zu bauen.'

'*Gliedermann*' meant a lay-figure in wood for artists; a marionette to display movements and positions where there was no living model. The meaning of '*Leuthen, dem Gliedermann der Taktik*' was thus a combat model of no will. Clausewitz considered that the battle of Leuthen was employed by the theorists as a general yardstick for good tactics, only to display their pet tactical ideas of positions and movements without taking the enemy into account.<sup>698</sup> Tempelhoff had once projected Leuthen as a new epitome of *Kriegskunst* and as proof of Friedrich's personal invention of a new system from which a theory could be constructed.<sup>699</sup> This had been observed and adopted by Jomini as the epitome of tactical art.<sup>700</sup> Clausewitz concluded the rationality of his artless strategic point of view, which included a theoretical embryo of the later concept of *Schwerpunkt*:

I will never understand the scholarly combinations of positions, roads and marches invented in advance, or have the slightest belief in the inventions of others. – Only the natural, the simple directed towards large structures [*Gegenstände*] repeats itself in war such as: the march on the main roads, the conquest of capitals, the defence of the major rivers and mountains. What occurs outside these natural and simple actions and gains the respect of being exceptional art and erudition is a product of coincidental competition of instantaneous appearances and does not repeat itself. Much of what takes place in war can be very erudite and unnatural and still practical and astute – never however in the preparations. Who would like the divided mountain positions of Friedrich II and Prince Heinrich, that where of so great utility to them and transform these into permanent directions [for training] in peace, which would constitute the laws of thought for the next war.<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> See "*Gliedermann*" in Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 2 (Leipzig: 1796), 722. [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/2000019767X> accessed 18 January 2012.

<sup>699</sup> Tempelhoff, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges in Deutschland*, Vol 1/6, 332

<sup>700</sup> Colonel Jomini, *Traité des grandes opérations militaires*, 5.vols (Paris: Giguët et Michaud, 1807-09); Ibid, *Kritische und militärische Geschichte der Feldzüge Friedrichs des Zweitem, verglichen mit denen des Kaisers Napoleon und dem neuen Systeme* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1811)

<sup>701</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31, cf. 328. 'Ich werde es niemals verstehen gelehrte Kombinationen von Stellungen, Straßen und Märschen im Voraus zu erfinden, oder an die Erfindungen anderer den geringsten Glauben haben. – Nur das Natürliche, Einfache auf große gegenstände gerichtete wiederholt sich im Kriege. Der Marsch auf den Haupt Straßen, die Eroberung der Haupt Städte, die Vertheidigung der Haupt Ströme und Gebirge. Was außer diesen natürlichen und einfachen Handlungen im Kriege vorkommt und das Ansehn besonderer Kunst und Gelehrsamkeit hat ist ein Produkt der zufälligen Konkurrenz augenblicklicher Erscheinungen und wiederholt sich nicht. Manches daher, was im Kriege selbst vorgehet kann sehr gelehrt und gekünstelt seyn und doch praktisch und weise – niemals aber in den Vorbereitungen. Wer möchte Friedrichs 2ten oder des Prinzen Heinrich zersplitternde Gebirgs Positionen, die ihnen im Kriege so nützlich geworden sind im bleibende Friedens-Einrichtungen verwandeln, die dem nächsten Kriegs Gesetze geben sollten.'

The practical dispute in Koblenz obviously reinforced Clausewitz's theoretical objections of March 1818 to a very high degree. Hake was old-school, inclined to develop complex system of marches, roads and positions in advance. The commander's 'scholarly analyses' proposed the construction of new, exclusive, military roads warranted only by a hypothetical military purpose to fulfil his strategic model. Clausewitz was indeed very sceptical about such expensive investments in military infrastructure, outside the commercial purpose of roads, for sustaining a strategic system of no proven value with taxpayer's money.<sup>702</sup> A similar argument was found in a memorandum of about the same time on a future war with Russia, also related to the construction of exclusive military infrastructure:

War draws to populated cities, large spaces and roads, that is about all one knows about war in advance, and the importance which some attempt to ascribe to one point here and there in an area through artificial relationships and also tries to verify, to make it a *Kardinal Punkt* [cardinal point] for all wars, has never been proved in the history of war. It is quite impossible from history to determine even the very overall lineaments a future war will have.<sup>703</sup>

Clausewitz obviously disproves here every attempt to stipulate cardinal points, thus more or less generic centres of gravity, for success and future operations. He argues that war has a tendency to take place in certain areas, but it is impossible to determine even the large contours of future war from experience. Clausewitz's view of war and objections help to understand the idea of the Small Volume and later *Vom Kriege*. Future war was impossible to forecast in any meaningful detail. Consequently, a realistic theory of war needed to be simple, recognize the warlike element and embrace dynamics.

It is also possible that Clausewitz wrote at least one text anonymously in the period, not yet recognized as his work, published by Brockhaus in 1817. Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus (1772-1823) was a renowned publisher as well as a committed patriot. The *Conversations-Lexicon* among other works made him famous. Brockhaus wrote and published also *Deutschen Blättern* 1813-1816, which was the official organ of the Allied war-effort. As described, Clausewitz wrote for Gneisenau in June 1813 an account on the Prussian war-effort, entitled *Der Feldzug von 1813 bis zum Waffenstillstand*, more

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<sup>702</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-31, cf. 329-29

<sup>703</sup> Clausewitz [1818-23? undated and unsigned manuscript] 'Ueber einen künftigen Krieg mit Russland in sofern er einfluß auf die Anlegung der Kunststraße nach Preußen hat', *Schriften* (1990), 1163-70, cf. 1164. 'Der Krieg zieht bevölkerten Städten, großen Räumen und Straßen nach das ist ziemlich alles was man von ihm vorher weiß und die Wichtigkeit welche man dem einen oder anderen Punkt einer Gegend durch künstliche Beziehungen auch außerdem beizulegen sucht, wodurch er zu einem Kardinal Punkt für alle Kriege werden soll hat sich nirgend in der KriegsGeschichte bewährt. Es ist daher ganz unmöglich auch nur die großen *Lineamente* bestimmt anzugeben welche ein künftiger Krieg haben wird.'

or less as propaganda to boost the will to continue the war after the armistice in August 1813.<sup>704</sup> Brockhaus published the second and/or third edition of this piece.<sup>705</sup>

Brockhaus published a journal entitled *Kriegsgeschichtliche und Kriegswissenschaftliche Monographien* 1817-1819. The first volume included one anonymous monograph, which in some details, language, style and topics resembles Clausewitz.<sup>706</sup> It was an account of the 1815 campaign presented in the style of anonymous letters, thus in the same style Clausewitz used for his first account of the Campaign 1806. It set out to tell 'the truth about friend and foe', with a polemical undertone. Clausewitz was as mentioned not entirely happy with official accounts of the campaign. Seemingly, he was also disappointed that the advocates of the old theory of *Kriegskunst*, like Valentini, continued to argue in the same old way, ignoring reality, the impact of energetic enmity and the brutality of modern war.

The monograph is detailed, 154 pages long. Eight 'letters' explain the events in a chronological order. It points out details of strategy. The text underlines the moral rebirth and moral strength of the Prussian army. An important aspect of Clausewitz's early work was to establish that moral strength and numbers should be considered as inseparable in estimating military strength, as for example in the texts printed in Book 3. The letter dated 18 June 1815 in the monograph expressed that the night before had been '...eine der fürchterlichsten, die ich je erlebt', one of the most dreadful nights in the author's life, which literally fitted Clausewitz's description of his own experience of this night.<sup>707</sup>

The unprecedented numbers of dead and wounded, the massive destruction in a small confined space was pointed out in great detail. The account clarified Bonaparte's initial confidence in victory, his mistake in bringing the baggage train close to the battle of Waterloo, blocking French retreat and the massive plunder that took place after the battle.<sup>708</sup> The monograph painted an unembellished picture of modern war as: brutal and warlike, fuelled by enmity, the imperative of moral strength, patriotism, public fighting for the right that terminated in main battle, i.e. fighting on the edge about the future. The text depicts in a nutshell, more or less, the consequence of the warlike element.

The anonymous monograph resembles Clausewitz indeed. Further research is needed to establish whether the monograph is his. But the vivid description of the final epic campaign explains a graphic reason for why Clausewitz theorized as he did in the first period. Basically stating the vantage point for enquiry, the *Grundvorstellung* of war:

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<sup>704</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz] [June 1813], *Der Feldzug von 1813 bis zum Waffenstillstand*, Dritte verbesserte Auflage (1813). The second and third edition was printed in Leipzig late 1813.

<sup>705</sup> Heinrich Brockhaus, *F.A. Brockhaus in Leipzig – Vollständiges Verzeichniss* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1872-75), 44

<sup>706</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz ?] [1817], 'Briefe eines preußischen Officiers über den Feldzug der verbündeten englischen und preußischen heere gegen die französische Armee im Jahre 1815', *Kriegsgeschichtliche und Kriegswissenschaftliche Monographien aus der neueren Zeit seit dem Jahre 1792*, Vol 1 (Leipzig und Altenburg: F.A. Brockhaus, 1817), 277-431

<sup>707</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz ?] [1817], *Briefe eines preußischen Officiers*, 321

<sup>708</sup> Anonymous [Clausewitz ?] [1817], *Briefe eines preußischen Officiers*, 348-53

'Der Krieg ist nichts als ein erweiterter Zweikampf.'<sup>709</sup> Thus, war is nothing but an extended physical duel and everything else is modifications to this fundamental idea. Chapter nine explores this theoretical starting point in more detail.

Brockhaus' *Konversations-Lexicon* (1822), presented Clausewitz as one of the most outstanding officers of the Prussian army. It further explained that he had written several essays for military journals that combated the false theories of '*der Modesysteme*', the trendy systems of strategic thought that depicted and explained the conduct of war as 'geometrical figures' or as 'geological analogies'.<sup>710</sup> In conclusion, Clausewitz was well known among his contemporaries for his combative posture against the old conventional theory of *Kriegskunst*.

So, Clausewitz recognized the difference between natural and conventional war seemingly from the start of his small volume on strategy. The two ways of war were not something he invented in 1827, struck by sudden genius, to fix a failing theory.<sup>711</sup> He simply regarded the conventional and limited approach as less true in theory and practically outdated for the moment, as proven by recent experience.

#### THE SMALL VOLUME - FOLLOWING THE URBESTIMMUNG OF WAR

The theoretical work Clausewitz commenced in 1816, which became *Vom Kriege*, was an answer to a lack of realism and a firm political-military view of war enabling one to think strategy properly. The root of the predominant poor military thought he found in the 'engineering principle' of war, which had dominated European military thought from after the Thirty Years' War to the French Revolution. The revolution had re-evoked natural war, which had been suppressed by the Enlightenment's political and moral beliefs, according to Clausewitz's interpretation.

Gneisenau was told on 14 November 1816 that Clausewitz felt lonely, since the friendly spirit of social life had disappeared in Koblenz. He had as a substitute devoted his time since the first week of November to work on a '*Darstellung des Krieges*', i.e. an exposition of war. In that time he had doubled the 'volume', also the content, he hoped. He wanted to send the drafts one after the other to Gneisenau, who had encouraged him to write. As a humble gesture he wrote that only his older friend's joyful approval could persuade him to complete the manuscript for print.<sup>712</sup> Note that Clausewitz's colleague Rühle von Lilienstern had published a work titled *Vom Kriege* 1814 on the theory of *Kriegskunst*.<sup>713</sup> This work resembles the scope of Clausewitz's work.

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<sup>709</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 630

<sup>710</sup> 'Clausewitz, Carl v.' in *Konversations-Lexicon. Neue Folge*, Vol 11.1 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1822), 664-65

<sup>711</sup> See Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 217 ff.; Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 30 ff.

<sup>712</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 14 November 1816, *Schriften* (1990), 234-37, cf. 237

<sup>713</sup> Rühle v. Lilienstern, *Vom Kriege. Ein Fragment aus einer Reihe von Vorlesungen über die Theorie der Kriegskunst* (Frankfurtam Main: Benner, 1814)



In the preface to *Vom Kriege* (1832) Marie also referred to 1816 as the starting point for the theoretical work.<sup>714</sup> She cited an undated postscript to the early project, apparently written by Clausewitz just before he left Koblenz in the autumn of 1818. He described his initial ambition as to write a '*kleineres Volumen*', an '*Oktavband*', hence a small volume or octavo on strategy.<sup>715</sup> He had started to write freely without any plan on what he found most important about strategy, but:

My nature alone drives me always to develop and systematize, it has in the end worked itself up to the fore again. For a time I was able to endure, and keep it out of the disquisitions which I wrote on different subjects, because I wanted them first to be clear and certain, only to project the most important results, and concentrate the *Geist* [essence] into a small volume; later my peculiarity completely ran away with me. However, I have developed what I could, and then naturally thereby with a reader not yet familiar with the subject in mind. The more I continued the work, the more I gave myself up to the spirit of enquiry, the more I was also brought back to *das System* [the system], and so chapter after chapter became connected.<sup>716</sup>

However, through the process of investigation he had become very involved in the work, caught up as he was by his bent for systematizing and filled with the ambition to write a book that would not be forgotten in a couple of years. Montesquieu's style had served as a faint model for him; thus short chapters to the point (*kurze, sentenzreiche Kapitel*). He compared the result, probably in 1818, to *Körner*, seeds, for the intelligent military mind to approach strategic questions, thus more or less framing starting points. Clausewitz described how he been pushed towards what he labelled as '*das System*'. This referred probably to the dichotomy of natural and conventional war, hence the distilled warlike element, which underlain his structure of ideas.

This postscript expressed a state of work done. The next step was to fuse the rhapsodic texts into a whole, editing the single texts into a consistent work. Later

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<sup>714</sup> Marie von Clausewitz, 'Vorede', written in the Marble Palace in Potsdam 30 June 1832, *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf. 174

<sup>715</sup> Clausewitz [1818?], untitled undated *post script* cited in Marie von Clausewitz, 'Vorrede', written in the Marble Palace at Potsdam 30 June 1832, *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf. 175-76

<sup>716</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1818?], untitled undated *post script*, cited in Marie von Clausewitz, 'Vorede', written in the Marble Palace at Potsdam 30 June 1832, *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf. 175. 'Allein meine Natur, die mich immer zum Entwickeln und Systematisieren treibt, hat sich am Ende auch hier wieder hervorgearbeitet. Eine Zeitlang vermochte ich es über mich, aus den Abhandlungen, welche ich für einzelne Gegenstände schrieb, weil sie mir dadurch selbst erst recht klar und sicher werden sollten, nur die wichtigsten Resultate herauszuheben und also den Geist in ein kleineres Volumen zu konzentrieren; später aber ist meine Eigentümlichkeit völlig mit mir durchgegangen, ich habe entwickelt, was ich gekonnt habe, und mir dann natürlich dabei einen mit dem Gegenstand noch nicht bekannten Leser gedacht. Je mehr ich fortgearbeitet, je mehr ich mich dem Geiste der Untersuchung hingegeben habe, um so mehr bin ich auch auf das System zurückgeführt, und so sind denn nach und nach Kapitel eingeschaltet worden.'

interpreters have regarded the early work as lost except for the essay *On the Progression and the Stagnation in Warlike Events* sent to Gneisenau in March 1817.<sup>717</sup> The Small Volume was however more of an initial working idea. The collection of texts published by Hahlweg in 1990 included several early pieces, which most likely were part of the initial work. When Clausewitz expanded his scope to write a larger piece these and other earlier texts were fused and revised in the process, to develop *Vom Kriege*.

To portray Clausewitz's work as a perfect, orderly, deliberate course seems not to reflect the way it was created. The early project, commenced in Koblenz, was apparently continued in Berlin towards the edited works we know today. Thematic texts were combined with essays and historical enquiries to expand the initial seeds. The Small Volume transmigrated into *Vom Kriege*, seemingly around 1823-1824. Texts written in the initial frame referred to other texts as chapters; for example the chapter on defence, attack and war plan. These aspects were later more thoroughly elaborated as books. To understand Clausewitz's way of thinking one has to understand the problem he perceived and the system he had faintly distilled in Koblenz.

Our first certain trace of the Small Volume was an essay sent to Gneisenau in March 1817 entitled '*On progression and stagnation in the warlike event*'.<sup>718</sup> It was written as a criticism of his previous outlines. It expressed a deeper understanding of historical development and human forces in play. Clausewitz's aim was to give strategy a context and theoretical coherence.

Your Excellency please allow me to send you a short essay on a subject that must be clearly thought through if one wishes to bring light and coherence into strategy. I raise a discussion that, like me, has become too long-winded, only as a concise summary to expose the result of my little work [up to now] and throw the drafts as falling shavings into the fire. If I now as an exception permit myself to send Your Excellency one such shaving it is because this is the best possible way to recognize the structure of the wood from which the work is carved.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Peter Paret, 'The Genesis of On War', in Clausewitz, *On War*, 3-25, cf.19; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 361; Gat, *A History of Military Thought*, 195

<sup>718</sup> Clausewitz [4 March 1817], 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten' amended to Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 4 March 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 243-55. First published by Hans Delbrück as: Carl v. Clausewitz, 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Zeitschrift für Preussische Geschichte und Landeskunde*, 15. JG (1878), 233-41

<sup>719</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 4 March 1817, with the amended text 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 243-44. 'Euer Exzellenz erlaube ich mir eine kleine Abhandlung zu übersenden, deren Gegenstand klar gedacht werden muß wenn man in die Strategie Licht und Zusammenhang bringen will. Ich nehme, wenn mir, wie hier, eine Auseinandersetzung zu weitschweifig geworden ist nur das Resultat in gedrängter Kürze in mein kleines Werk auf und werfe die Vorarbeit wie abgefallene Hobelspäne ins Feuer. Wenn ich dießmal eine Ausnahme mache und mich unterstehe Euer Exzellenz einen solchen Span zuzusenden so ist es weil man daraus am besten die Struktur des Holzes erkennen kann, aus dem das Werk geschnitten ist.'

Gneisenau was told about his friend's unlucky theoretical inclination to 'develop everything from itself', which can be compared to the warlike element. His first superficial view of strategy had come so easily, but the problem of progress and stagnation here outlined could not be easily overlooked. Most people would not notice this inconsistency. Therefore his standpoint risked drawing down contempt and mockery upon him. Clausewitz felt Gneisenau was the one to ask if he was on the right track, as one of Germany's best commanders and a man who understood his way of reasoning.<sup>720</sup> Gneisenau responded enthusiastically a month later to his thoughtful but doubtful friend: 'Do not throw the shavings away from me, my noble friend; I would like to have them all, to make me happy on your behalf, to keep you [working]'.<sup>721</sup> In this essay Clausewitz problematized theoretically but concisely several aspects of the conduct of war. He outlined a germ of interacting theoretical components, which he would continue to develop in future work. I here propose ten components as aids to grasping Clausewitz's way of thinking:

1. The game (*Das Spiel*) constituted the setting for this essay, which was outlined as an analogy to the game of chance, Pharaoh (*Hasardkartenspiel*). When a player, cf. Bonaparte, joined a game for pure gain, a certain inconsequence would occur if he did not stake everything on one card to win or lose instantly. The joy of the game *per se* could of course be a reason to prolong the event, but this was mostly not the case among professional players, who regarded playing games as something more than a job. The lack of a proper 'games philosophy' was however more common and, even among intelligent players, not a self-evident basis for their game.

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<sup>720</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 4 March 1817, *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 244. 'Ich habe nun einmal den unglücklichen Trieb alles aus sich selbst zu entwickeln und würde, wenn ich mich weniger verschlossen, gewissermaßen geheim dabei benehme viel Tadel vielleicht gar Spott auf mich ziehen; und doch ist es Bedürfnis sich von Zeit zu Zeit des rechten Weges zu versichern. Die rohen Einwendungen der ersten oberflächlichen Ansicht verwunden mich zu leicht und es ist schwer sie abzuwehren, weil die Menchen nun einmal gewohnt sind niemand aussprechen zu lassen, der nicht auf der Kanzel oder dem Katheder steht. Euer Exzellenz haben mich von jeher so leicht und ganz verstanden, daß ich mich nicht scheue Sie wie einen des Landes kundigen Mann den man auf seinem Wege antrifft, nach der rechten Straße zu fragen. Lächeln Sie über das Steckenpferd des Reisenden, aber halten Sie es ihm bei dem Mangel dringender Arbeiten zu gut.'

<sup>721</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 6 April 1817, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 199-201, cf. 200. 'Werfen Sie mir die Späne nicht weg, mein edler Freund, ich will sie haben, mich an ihnen erfreuen, sie aufbewahren.... Ihr Aufsatz über das Fortschreiten und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten ist mir wie aus der Seele geschrieben. Sie haben so sehr das Talent der Entwicklung und des Erforschens der ersten Quellen. Was ich über den genannten Gegenstand verworren gefühlt hatte, haben Sie mir nun klar in die Seele geschrieben. Immer habe ich begriffen, daß der Fürst Blücher nimmermehr den Muth gehabt hätte, solche Entwürfe auszuführen, wäre er nicht ein wegwegener Spieler von Natur, geübt bei Pharaon und Würfeln. Nun Weiß ich die Ursache in klar ausgesprochener Rede. Ich will mehr klare Erkenntnis von solchen Dingen haben, darum dürfen Sie mir nichts wegwerfen, sondern Sie müssen mir alles mittheilen, die Geschichte des Baues und Sein Gerüst.'

The reason was, according to Clausewitz, the natural human fear of certainty as to one's destiny and leaving hope behind. Good luck and bad luck varied over time but their causes were not investigated. Clausewitz continued about the game: 'It holds everyone floating, those who eventually realize the impossibility, either through their own reason, or from outside, of gaining beneficial circumstances for themselves, the players. – Many of these moral considerations have an effect in war, and a person who knows how to abstract from less important matters will not find it untrue [irony to impersonal theory], to say the game is merely the commander's conduct of the war concentrated into one action.'<sup>722</sup>

2. The warlike act (*kriegerischer Akt*), had theoretically to be understood as an individual totality, thus both sides and both commanders together, as a composite of the whole war (*Krieg als ein Ganzes*). This theoretical view underlay Clausewitz's understanding of defence and attack as an individual relation, where the former form of war was stronger in itself. The totality was in fact a complex of individual relations, which limited the scope of empirical generalization.

3. The warlike element (*das kriegisches Element*) was articulated as an *Urbestimmung*, primordial determination of swift and bloody progression to achieve freedom by defeating/annihilating (*Vernichtung*) threats with an effort of no absolute scale. The primordial determination was derived from Clausewitz's interpretation of historical development. In his opinion the warlike element had been forgotten or neglected due to moral progress after the Thirty Years' War, but re-emerged in Europe as a consequence of the French Revolution. The logic of the warlike element was also expressed as the primordial purpose of armament (*der Urzweck der Rüstung*), or as the nature of the thing (*Natur der Sache*), or as the essence of war (*das Wesen des Krieges*). The following passage expresses Clausewitz's *Urbestimmung*, i.e. primordial determination of war and logical starting-point, indispensable to understand his way to think and analyse strategy.

Fighting forces for war are equipped to annihilate those opposing them, and through this to achieve freedom, or to dictate any desired terms to the enemy government. Here, in this *Urbestimmung* [primordial determination – cf. *Zweikampf - Niederwerfung*], time does not exist, except in so far as all human beings must exist, not as its own *Agens*, not as a healthy counterweight. *Das Wesen des Krieges* [The essence, or temper, of war] is thus a swift, continuing action, a continuing progress to the aim; that is a violent, bloody, swiftly-terminating, decisive fight [cf. Waterloo]. Passionate power and speed in time have no absolute dimensions indeed, because the level of effort and the sum of the means cannot be determined absolutely [cf. *Wechselwirkungen*]...<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> Clausewitz [4 March 1817], 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 249. 'Sie hält selbst denjenigen im Schweben, der die Unmöglichkeit einsieht mit der Zeit, entweder durch seine eigene Klugheit, oder durch Einwirkungen von außen, irgend einen vorteilhaften Umstand für sich zu gewinnen, nemlich – den Spieler. – Viel von dieser moralischen Erscheinungen ist wirksam im Kriege, und wer von weniger wichtigen Dingen zu abstrahiren weiß, wird es nicht unwahr finden, wenn man sagt, das Spiel ist nichts als die in eine Handlung konzentrierte Kriegsbahn des Feldherrn.

<sup>723</sup> Clausewitz [4 March 1817], 'Ueber das Fortschritt und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten', *Schriften* (1990), 243-55, cf. 249. 'Die Streitkräfte zum Kriege werden ausgerüstet

4. Logic inconsistency articulated as stagnation (*Stillstand*) in the act of war was used to illustrate the evident gap between the *Urbestimmung* of war and the experience of war. Clausewitz argued that it was difficult to separate the rule of thought from its exception through a glimpse of experience. Prolongation of war could not be referred to the joy of the participants as in a game, at least not in theory. But swift, decisive campaigns were in fact very few historically, especially since armies had grown bigger.

Clausewitz considered 1706, 1757 and almost all Bonaparte's campaigns to be as swift as natural friction allowed them to be, which made them appear as perfect theoretical models. The objection was the rareness of these campaigns. In addition, they were conducted in very special circumstances, which raised the question of whether one should view them as the rule or the antithesis (*Regel oder der Gegensatz der Regel*). Clausewitz argued that no one had asked this type of question before, which can be compared to his statement in the Preface about the system. This displayed the shortcomings of previous military theory and motivated further enquiries. The concept of friction was created here to convey the gap between theory and practice, to explain and overcome logical inconsistencies between the concepts of the warlike and experience.

5. Reduction of action (*Ermäßigung der Handlung*), was a set of conditions or concepts to further conceptualize stagnation and friction, thus to explain logical inconsistencies between the primordial determination of the warlike element and experience. Clausewitz introduced two theoretical *Sperräder*, i.e. ratchet wheels to save the conceptual coherence of the *Kriegskunst*, seemingly unimportant but of significance to understand stagnation. First, the uncertainty and doubt of the enemy's situation (*Unwissenheit*) makes advantages elusive. True reason blends with imaginary reason: to proceed according to primordial logic, or wait for better information. False deductions were however no exceptions, inadequate information was no coincidence; instead it had to be considered as the theoretical norm for strategic thinking.

6. The precept of the natural superiority of defence (*Ueberlegenheit der Vertheidigung*) both tactically and strategically was articulated as the second ratchet wheel to explain standstill and logical inconsistency. Unequal strength was clearly present in the experience of how commanders had understood their strength. The strength of the attack was weakened or exhausted (*erschöpft*) in an extending movement, a non-attack, thus defence, simply required less energy. Clausewitz described these two ratchet wheels, also expressed as counter-weights to primordial determination, as part of the nature of war. These components together made a certain space between the defence capability and attack capability, of which a player could make.

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um die entgegen stehenden zu vernichten, und dadurch die Freiheit zu bekommen, der feindlichen Regierung beliebige Bedingungen vorzuschreiben. Hier, in dieser Urbestimmung kommt die Zeit noch nicht weiter vor, als in so fern sich alles Menschliche in der Zeit zutragen muß; nicht als ein eigenes *Agens*, nicht als ein heilsames Gegengewicht. Das Wesen des Krieges ist also also ein raches, unaufhaltenes Handeln, ein unaufhaltsames Vorschreiten zum Ziel; d.h. ein heftiger, blutiger, schnell geendigter entscheidender Kampf. Freilich leiden Kraft und Geschwindigkeit hier keine absoluten Maaßen, weil der Grad der Anstrengung und die Summe der Mittel sich nicht absolut bestimmen lassen...' (my emphersize)

7. The war statutes of a people framed and determined the prospect of rapid decision. If the responsibility resided solely with the army, then decision was situated in the battle and the outcome decided the campaign. Seemingly, this was his opinion about old Prussia. Clausewitz proved this standpoint by referring to the rapid campaigns in old Asia, which created a greater swing and turn of the tide (*Umschwung*) than the wars in classical Greece and Italy. The wars of the Middle Ages were more decisive than those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The wars preceding the Thirty Years' War were thus nested in a more natural approach to war. In the previous century, fortifications and logistics had been developed extensively. A defeated army could fall back on fortifications and allied support, which raised obstacles and counter-weights for the victor to use the situation. This had diminished the effect of victory in battle. Finally, the structure of resistance (*Gebäude des Widerstand*) had to change to counter a successful player like Napoleon. The absence of proper resistance, however, obviously helped to underpin his success, which brought forth new institutions such as *Landwehr* and *Volksbewaffnung*, the arming of the people and guerilla war. Both were constituted on the spirit and purpose of the warlike element.

8. The Player (*Der Spieler*) was not an abstraction but a true individual that could perform, handle fear and face his destiny differently. Individual fear was thus also a reduction of action. It was therefore not strange that the warlike element, the primordial determination was suppressed in most wars and almost invisible. According to the historical record, the most warlike wars were conducted by coarse people (*roher Völke* - less civilized) and young commanders in their first campaigns.

These young daredevils had a tendency to push their campaigns and their destiny to the utmost (*Aeußerste*). Clausewitz referred escalation to hotheads, ambition and human brutality. The French Revolution made the warlike element valid again, followed by Bonaparte; the most foolhardy player of all time (*der tollkühnste aller Waghalse*), staking always everything on one card. Since his appearance almost all campaigns had achieved the momentum of a comet, the most warlike imaginable.

9. Theory should not be predicated on 'Phantoms', arbitrary wishes without any inner logical necessity, or outer justification of the employment armed force. A theory for *Kriegskunst* could of course not prescribe the effort to be made in a military enterprise; it was up to the commander how he should reach his aims. Theoretical enquiries could however begin after the action had been taken, to separate swiftness and power from luck.

In studying the commander's performance one had to distinguish between individual enterprising spirit (*Unternehmungsg Geist*) and individual skill (*Geschicklichkeit*). The former was to be considered a warlike virtue (*kriegische Tugend*), which could bring both success and bad results. If art was not connected to reason, thus to sound political judgement, one could only feel sorrow. The theoretical critique had to separate and compare these two qualities on an equal basis and let success decide which was important at that moment.

10. War as a common product of society (*gemeinschaftliches Produkt*) was Clausewitz's answer to the contradiction between the *Urbestimmung* of war and experience. He

discussed the creation of large warring states and the more warlike wars in the recent period in contrast to the wars and conditions of the Enlightenment. Strong statutes along with the warlike element had made campaigns bloody but not decisive; their effects were '*beschränkt*', limited, which can be compared to his later development of the war plan in Book 8 in terms of limited aim – '*beschränktes Ziel*'.

In the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the initial campaign was the only warlike one, the succeeding ones mostly resembled armed peace negotiations. The initial loss of blood and the suffering brought the parties to their senses, and the war went cold. Each side waited for the other to say the first word of compliance. The contestants waited for peace, for the opponent to make a mistake and for the opportunity to show itself. This can be compared to his later description of limited aim as '*diplomatic Kriegskunst*'.

His conclusion was that history did not offer any lessons about future political-military constitutions. The future had to tell whether people and governments would be rendered more cautious about going to war and keener to make peace. It was not possible to determine whether the swift and decisive progress of war would remain a valid '*Gesetz des Krieges*', i.e. the law of thought for strategy in war. That means he discussed relevance of natural war and conventional war but found it impossible to determine what course future conflict may take by historical analysis. Hence, his future coining to think strategy properly, that war should be understood as a continuation of *Politik* with other means, was never really intellectually far away.

Clausewitz kept his theoretical work to himself, Gneisenau and a couple of close friends. Gröben became familiar with the work, probably from the same source as Gneisenau. Gröben was appointed chief of general staff to the regional Command of Silesia in Breslau on 9 May 1817. Clausewitz sent Gröben a copy of the general staff map of Prussia in preparation. In the amended note he disclosed some more information about his work. 'About the work of which *Graf* Gneisenau has spoken, you already know the first sample. I have in this manner worked up the major parts of strategy during the past winter; the manuscript alone is not ready for release, since it is still raw pieces of work...'<sup>724</sup> The whole manuscript needed to be edited and some parts were perhaps not good enough. Clausewitz had not made up his mind to reveal the work and asked for discretion. Gröben was not convinced about his friend's approach and told their mutual acquaintance Leopold Gerlach already the next day:

Clausewitz and his wife send you their greetings. They are both brave honest people. I am familiar with the work Gneisenau speaks about, as far as he [Clausewitz] has written it, which is a couple of sheets, but can according to my conviction not completely pass the sentence our admirable Gneisenau has expressed. It is more critical than constant, that

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<sup>724</sup> Clausewitz to Karl v.d. Gröben, [Koblenz] 17 May 1817, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 420-21. 'Was die Arbeit betrifft, von welcher Graf Gneisenau gesprochen, so kennen Sie die erste Probe davon schon. Ich habe im verflossenen Winter in dieser Manier den größten Theil der Strategie bearbeitet, allein das Manuscript eignet sich gar nicht zu einer Mitteilung, da es lauter rohe Werkstücke sind...' Kessel wrote 1816 as the year of writing for this letter, which must be a mistake. It is obviously May 1817, as proved by Groeben's letter to Gerlach below.

is good, but the peaky provoking tone of what is written breaks through, and that is not good. The *Kriegskunst* has become *Verlässlicher* [more calculable, steady, and dependent] and in style greater than before, though it would not be right to throw away [or neglect] the mid-term of the period completely, which actually means, tearing apart the entire body [of war?], when a head and foot would have better pleased. A book from Latrille: *Considérations sur la guerre* [Considerations on war, 1804] has appealed better to me. Enough of that! Clausewitz is too capable for something average to appear from him.<sup>725</sup>

Gröben actually questioned Clausewitz's analytical system of war between progression and stagnation. That means whether it was relevant to consider military thought of the Enlightenment as an anomaly, to project the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element as a philosophical base for strategic thought, in addition, to put such emphasis on the latest grand scale public wars and the style of gambling for high stakes. It seems very likely that Gröben discussed this potential analytical mistake with his close friend. Clausewitz told Gneisenau in March 1818 of his 'artless and natural' approach to strategy.<sup>726</sup> He explicitly regarded the wars of the time between Louis XIV and the French Revolution as anomalies in the history of war, which may be the 'mid-term' Gröben referred to in May 1817.

Several texts exist that most certainly were developed with the Small Volume in mind, as the present work will show. However, these were fused into the larger work that becomes *Vom Kriege*. I have developed the other texts possibly written for the Small Volume structured from the transmigration to *Vom Kriege*, because it has not been possible to reconstruct the outline of the initial work sufficiently.

In conclusion, Clausewitz had the clear ambition to theorize the warlike element as basis for strategic thought. However, Gröben apparently, more or less, predicted Clausewitz's analytical solution of 1826-1827, which included the explicit theoretical use of the wars of the Enlightenment to clarify the approach of limited aim. The twist had then conceptual rather than historical reasons. It is perfectly clear that Clausewitz did not discover the Enlightenment way of war in 1827 as most interpretations suggest. Clausewitz had already in Koblenz a good grasp of the history of war, but he

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<sup>725</sup> Graf Karl v.d. Gröben to Leopold v. Gerlach, Koblenz 18 May 1817, in *Aus den Jahren Preussischer Not und Erneuerung – Tagebücher und Briefe der Gebrüder Gerlach und ihres Kreises 1805-1820*, Hg. Hans Joachim Schoeps (Berlin: Haude & Spenersche, 1963), 575. 'Clausewitz und Frau grüßen Dich herzlich. Sie sind beide tüchtige ehrliche Menchen. Das Werk, von dem Gneisenau spricht, kenne ich, soweit er es geschrieben hat, d.h. einige Bogen, dennoch kann ich nach meiner Überzeugung nicht ganz das Urteil fällen, was unserer trefflicher Gneisenau ausgesprochen hat. Es ist mehr kritisch als dauernd, das ist gut, aber die kränklich verärgerte Stimmung, in der es geschrieben wurde, bricht durch, und das ist nicht gut. Die *Kriegskunst* ist *Verlässlicher* und im Stil größer geworden als früher, der tut aber Unrecht, die Mittelzeit der Periode ganz verwerfen will, und das hieße so viel, als der Leib zerreißen, weil einem Kopf und Füße besser gefallen. Ein Buch von Latrille: *Considérations sur la guerre* hat mir besser gefallen. Doch genug davon! Clausewitz ist zu tüchtig als daß etwas Mittelmäßiges von ihm erscheinen sollte.'

<sup>726</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-32, cf. 328



tried to theorize the warlike element to make military efforts more calculable in strategic terms, in addition more resilient to future war, unknown on principle.

## REFLECTION - NATURPHILOSOPHIE

Kant, Schelling, Goethe among others underpinned a conception of the living nature in Clausewitz's time as exhibiting fundamental organic types – expressed as archetypes in terms of *Urtypen*, *Urbilden*, *Haupttypen*, etc.. That means Clausewitz's *Urbestimmung* of war was not alien to this intellectual world. Kant had propounded that scientific analysis of nature should be made according to the categories of Newtonian science.

Roberts Richards explains in his analysis of the *Romantic Conception of Life* the Kantian view: 'The necessary and universal laws of nature, including living nature, had to be parsed mechanistically that is, so that an organism and its activities be understood as the determinate consequence of the operations of its parts. The Kantian biologist, then should only deploy archetypal notions heuristically, *as if* organisms had been the products of an ideal plan, while yet searching for proper mechanistic causes.'<sup>727</sup> Clausewitz's way of analysis resembles partly *Naturphilosophie*, for example:

- a. *Causal forces* were used to explain the instantiation of the *Urtyp* and its progressive variation. These forces were not incompatible with more everyday physical powers. Clausewitz tried to uncover universal casual forces in the use of force and power. The best example is perhaps the diminishing power of attack and culmination point. Ultimately he employed *Politik* as the major casual force to explicitly explain the variation of war for strategic thought.
- b. *Theologically ordered*, Kant argued that organisms should be understood as they were designed so that disparate parts functioned reciprocally as end and means for the overall purpose of a being. Clausewitz's basic way to analyse strategy was by investigating the interaction of purpose and means in the particular case of war in order to determine the usefulness and purposefulness of action. War was analytically a thing to him with a clear purpose.

The organic conception of nature as propounded by for example Herder, Goethe and Schelling opposed the mechanistic view originating from Descartes and Newton. Nature according to the organic view was not the mere product of the Creator, but itself a producer - of itself. Richards explained the Romantic view of nature as a move from earlier simpler states to more progressively developed states. This made nature temporalized, i.e. the growing of individuals formed historical entities. The mechanistic conception of nature was atemporal and ahistorical, while nature as self-productive could have a history. Clausewitz was acquainted with several scholars who elaborated this way of thinking in various ways, for example Heinrich Steffens, Alexander von Humboldt and Paul Erman.

Basically, Clausewitz used a 'mechanistic conception' of war to uncover casual forces. The *Urbestimmung* of war was indeed important to his ideas about strategy right up to the final texts. However, he also used and developed a more sophisticated 'organic conception'. Basically, natural war was an organic conception. He explained for

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<sup>727</sup> This part relies on the analysis of *Naturphilosophie* in; Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 8 ff, quote on 9

example how war remade itself repeatedly after revolution due to intrinsic energy and powers, constantly making new epitomes. Note that Clausewitz in 1817 regarded war and conventions of war, like other human affairs, explicitly as a *gemeinschaftliches Produkt*, i.e. as a complex product of social life. This is very close to the broader meaning of *Politik* he had in mind 1827. War was to be studied as complex individuals in their particular context, as we will see in following chapters.

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The chapter has pointed out the post-war start of Clausewitz's theorizing of war and thinking of strategy. It has noted that he distilled a dichotomy of natural war and conventional war, which resembles the modern meaning of 'paradigm'. As a response to scholarly strategy and less realistic models of *Kriegskunst* he distilled the *Urbestimmung* of war, hence the warlike element. The chapter noted how he tried to make strategy coherent and interpret the role of context by analysing progression and stagnation in the great warlike events. Ten important components were suggested as aids to understand his future ideas. The early work in Koblenz to make a small volume on strategy was explained, which constituted the seeds to *Vom Kriege*. Finally, a short reflection was made about *Naturphilosophie* to provide an intellectual context to further grasp Clausewitz's way of thinking in terms of the *Urbestimmung*.

In conclusion, the adjustment of 1827 to further stress the element of *Politik*, then in a slightly broader meaning, was never really far away. The double way of war was not new to Clausewitz in 1827. The embryo to this device was distilled already in Koblenz. The role of *Politik*, and policy in particular, was not discovered in 1827 as some interpretations suggest. Somewhat simplified the *Urbestimmung* of war expanded and reconceptualised into the 'fickle trinity'. War was made an explicit product of *Politik* and context; thereof, think strategy as war, i.e. the warlike element is a continuation of *Politik*. Basically, the 1827adjustment was a matter of intellectual fine-tuning to save the relevance of the warlike element. After this theoretical exposé, we should remember that Clausewitz was basically a very pragmatic thinker. His work had practical motives. It is easy to make him more 'philosophical' than he intended. He was a sworn enemy of theoretical speculation.



## 8. BERLIN INTRIGUES

### THE MEN OF 1806 RISE AGAIN

This battle of Kay is a good proof of the *Naturalistentheorie*: that attack, directly attacking right into the enemy (*daraufgehen* cf. Karl XII) from marching with reckless determination, is a foolproof means for [tactical] victory. In no battle were these three things so intimate, and no general possessed this one-sided virtuosity that is necessary more than General Wedel. Even though General Wedel acted thus from naturalism, a kind of imitation of the battle of Roßbach was in place.<sup>728</sup>

Chapter 8 elucidates Clausewitz's first period in Berlin, from 1819 to about 1823. The aftermath of war was very largely a period of political turmoil, '*Umtriebe*' in German. In this turmoil 'the men of 1806' regained the upper hand and the reformers' influence was pressed back, which Clausewitz's texts at this point objected to and analysed. He also projected the '*Naturalistentheorie*' of the conduct of war in contrast to older theory of *Kriegskunst*.

He investigated Friedrich the Great's strategy to give a fresh interpretation as a counter-weight to the predominant scholarly strategy that had misinterpreted the pragmatism of *Alte Fritz* in favour of secret, re-usable strategic combinations. He analysed the evidently severe catastrophe of 1806 and the good rebirth of Prussia that was made possible by the campaign of 1812. Seemingly, from this exposé of the bad and defence of the good, the Small Volume transmigrated into the larger frame of *Vom Kriege* around 1823-1824, which Chapter 9 will address.

The chapter first analyses Clausewitz's early ambitions in Berlin along with the political turmoil that tumbled the German states after the peace. In this period the conservative faction was successful and diminished the influence of the reformers. Secondly, Clausewitz's *Umtriebe* essay, which developed an interesting historical perspective to comprehend the present turmoil, is treated. He pointed in conclusion to Metternich's vast influence on Prussia's political affairs and the Austrian's mistrust of

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<sup>728</sup> Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf. 115-16. 'Diese Schlacht bei Kay ist eine gute Wiederlegung der Naturalistentheorie: daß angreifen, auf dem Marsch angreifen, mit rücksichtsloser Entschlossenheit daraufgehen, ein unfehlbares Mittel zum Siege sei. In keiner Schlacht waren diese drei Dinge so beisammen, und kein General besaß mehr wie General Wedel die einseitige Virtuosität, welche dazu erforderlich ist. Obgleich General Wedel aus naturalismus so handelte, so war doch eine Art von Nachäffung der roßbacher Schlacht dabei.'

the Prussian Army, which he labelled a shield for revolutionary tendencies. Thirdly, the analysis of Friedrich's strategy in which Clausewitz set out to disapprove retrograde interpretations and ruling older theory is briefly addressed. The chapter ends with a brief analysis of his severe criticism of the men of 1806. It would seem that this work encouraged the transmigration to *Vom Kriege*.

#### AMBITIONS IN POLITICAL TURMOIL

Clausewitz spent the first two months of 1819 learning to understand his new job as director of administration at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* and the military education conducted there. He was obviously not satisfied and on 21 March sent Boyen a memorandum on the need for reform.<sup>729</sup> The letter was to be seen as an informal observation since it was outside his responsibilities. The curriculum and teaching approach resembled that at a minor German University rather than an institution for professional knowledge and individual ability.<sup>730</sup> Seemingly, Clausewitz missed Scharnhorst's approach of practical military *Bildung*. His classmate Rule von Lilienstern had been director of studies since 1816 and the architect of the present curriculum, with a large component of civilian subjects. Lilienstern personified more or less the ideal of traditional *Bildung*. He had a strong belief that this was also the proper approach for a modern military education.

Boyen believed in this broader approach to military education related to his pet project of organising an army built on general conscription. But he conceded some of the shortcomings Clausewitz had observed.<sup>731</sup> However it was not until 1826 that the curriculum was revised towards a more military approach. Two days after the date of Clausewitz's memorandum, more urgent political issues took over Boyen's attention. The war veteran and student Karl Ludwig Sand murdered the anti-liberal playwright and Russian envoy August von Kotzebue in Mannheim, driven by patriotic sentiments.<sup>732</sup>

According to Görres' provoking text '*Deutschland und die Revolution*' published later in 1819 the deed 'struck the German people like lightning'.<sup>733</sup> The murder of Kotzebue was taken as a reason to tighten control over political life in the German states at the ministerial congress of the *Deutsche Bund* in Karlsbad during August 1819. The Karlsbader Decrees issued by the *Bundestag* in Frankfurt on 20 September gave instructions for increased surveillance and targeting of liberal as well as national tendencies. This meant student organisations such as the *Jena Burschenschaften* and individual demagogues. In four laws, the freedom of public written opinion was

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<sup>729</sup> Clausewitz to Boyen, Berlin 21 March 1819, 'Denkschrift über die Reform der Kriegsschule zu Berlin.', *Schriften* (1990), 1151-63. [In Nachlaß Boyen]

<sup>730</sup> See v. Scharfenort, *Die Königlich preußische Kriegsakademie 1810-1910* (Berlin: Mittler, 1910), 26-60

<sup>731</sup> See Meinicke, *Boyen*, Vol 2/2, 106-17; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 272-81

<sup>732</sup> Hiltrud Häntzschel, 'Kotzebue, August von', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 12 (1979), 624-25 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118565796.html> accessed on 31 October 2011.

<sup>733</sup> J. Görres, *Teutschland und die Revolution* (Koblenz: In Kommission des H.j Hölches, 1819); Cited from Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 279

restricted by censorship. The German universities were put under surveillance and liberal professors prohibited to teach. The decrees remained in political effect until the March revolution of 1848, and long influenced political life.

Shortly after the Karlsbader Decrees, Gneisenau concisely summarised to Princess Louise the German political turmoil from his own political point of view, a view he shared with Clausewitz, which warrants citing. He identified three political parties and regarded the impact of the Karlsbader Decrees as not yet visible. Gneisenau inserted ironically that he and Clausewitz alone represented a 'fourth party' founded on the honour of the state instead of on private ambitions and personal conflicts. The former probably possessed more aristocratic values than the latter: 'First the hard core [violent] Liberals, with whom the real Jacobins and Revolutionaries can be counted. They have forgotten all sobrieties and respect towards the Government, denigrated it as such, abused and humiliated where they possibly could; a stop is now rightly put to their game...'

Gneisenau thought very few belonged to this party. 'Then there are the hard-core persecutors; those the fearful join. They calumniate, foster mistrust, collect statements and poison them with interpretation. What the secret police bring out of speeches and correspondence, cannot of its nature be collected in a proper way at all. Through this party the poison is even more intensified; they will soon develop to a Spanish Inquisition, should the king not have the right mind... A third party, and by far the largest, consists of true supporters of the monarchy, who are affected by the constitutional *Gestaltung* of the state, and the concern that more than necessary was decided at the Congress of Karlsbad and at the German *Bundestag*; that they abandoned independence and giving oneself to Austria, which guile has acquired from the primacy of German affairs and henceforth caveats our constitutional movements. This party is joined by the enemies of Count Hardenberg...' Now Gneisenau confessed his and Clausewitz's political standpoint.

'I could also mention a fourth party to your Royal Highness, but it is too weak indeed, since it consists of General von Clausewitz and me only. We believe, you see, that all three parties are more or less wrong on several points; the misbehaviour of the first deserves castigation; the addiction to persecution of the second is abominable, and the concern of the third is exaggerated, and those among them that make their antagonism or their ambition the yardstick of their political *Grundsätze*...One ascribes to both of us, at least to me, once in a while the undeserved honour of making out that we are friends of the *Grundsätze* of the French Revolution, and never has anybody seen such unfairness as ours. We have both at all times observed the French Revolution with disgust, as with all *hierländische Trieben* [domestic movements?], founded on similar *Grundsätzen*. I despise every one of them you see...'<sup>734</sup>

Gneisenau's description gives a glimpse of the real-life political complexity surrounding Clausewitz's military ideas immediately preceding *Vom Kriege*. Both had a sceptical view of how politics were done and a distrust of honesty, which indicates perhaps one reason why Clausewitz deliberately tried to circumvent the role of *Politik* in the theory

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<sup>734</sup> Gneisenau to Princess Louise Fürstin Radzivil, Berlin 22 October 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 379-81

of war to think strategy properly. In a subsequent letter Gneisenau further elaborated his political *Grundsätze* to calm the worries of the princess, since it was acknowledged that he had been put under surveillance.<sup>735</sup> Clausewitz objected to the many secret societies present in social and political life in the autumn of 1819, which he thought had lost common sense.<sup>736</sup>

Two major conflicts dominated political life in Prussia and the German states after the destruction of French preponderance. The first concerned Prussia's constitution. The German states had in fact long fallen between two political orders of society. One was the old feudal order and the other a modern order based on individualism. It is said that Wellington regarded Prussia at the end of the Napoleonic Wars as a less healthy political organism than France itself, since there was no authority in society any more.<sup>737</sup> Hardenberg's political project after 1815 sought to implement a new constitution of estates (*reichsständige*) and this proposal encountered massive opposition.

A second conflict concerned the prospect of German unification. The Congress of Vienna had only managed to create a German *Bund* instead of a German *Reich*, due to the diversity of sovereign political interests. As we have seen Clausewitz regarded the aim of German political unity as an illusion, at least for the moment. He argued, and in fact predicted in the unfinished essay entitled *Umtriebe* from around 1820, that the only way to achieve German political unity was by the sword. One strong German state had to subjugate the others and incorporate them. He added that the time had not come for such a profound change and the leading state of such a political enterprise could not be foreseen for the moment.<sup>738</sup>

Boyen had as Minister of War invested much time and prestige to develop the *Landwehr* along with the institution of general conscription after 1815. The law of public military service (*Wehrgesetz*) and the institution of the *Landwehr* presupposed arming the people, to which Prussia's conservatives strongly objected. It was seen as a threat to political power and a source of potential revolution. Prussia's finances were bad after the war and a policy to reduce military expenses was proposed in 1819. One proposition was to incorporate the *Landwehr* as part of the line units of the standing army. Boyen refused to accept this policy and handed in his resignation in December 1819, to be followed by Grolman.

Clausewitz described the situation to Gröben in a Christmas letter. He, Boyen and Grolman among others had regarded a possible suspension of the *Landwehr* as a silent diplomatic concession to Austria, which Hardenberg had denied.<sup>739</sup> The *Staatskanzler*

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<sup>735</sup> Gneisenau to Princess Louise Fürstin Radzivil, Berlin 20 November 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 384-88

<sup>736</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, undated and unsigned letter [August-September 1819?], *Schriften* (1990), 365-66

<sup>737</sup> Cited by Delbrück in Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 23

<sup>738</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-22], 'Umtriebe', *Schriften* (1922), 153-95, cf. 184, 171

<sup>739</sup> Clausewitz to Groeben, 26 December 1819, *Schriften* (1979), 259-64. First published by Eberhard Kessel, 'Zu Boyens Entlassung', *Historische Zeitschrift* (München: Oldenburg, 1953), 41-54

was however regarded by many as increasingly politically benevolent towards Austria and Metternich after 1815, not least owing to the Karlsbader Decrees.

Clausewitz wrote two essays on the *Landwehr* and Prussia's military constitution at the end of 1819. The first, a shorter text sent to Gneisenau on 17 December, addressed the political benefits and drawbacks of the *Landwehr*. The argument was that armed people possess more fighting power than a separate standing army, proven by for example the French Revolution. A military constitution built on a clever integration of people, *Landwehr* and a standing army could itself be a stabilizer of society and a force multiplier, in Clausewitz's opinion.<sup>740</sup>

In the second, longer, text entitled *Unsere Kriegsverfassung* he defended the institution of *Landwehr* based on the political view that Prussia should not resign itself to being, and understand itself as, a small state, as some suggested. Prussia was squeezed between the two major powers of Europe, Russia and France, and had more to fear from that geographical condition than from arming its people.<sup>741</sup> His defence of the *Landwehr* was based on a historical comparison of the strength of fighting forces in relation to military expenditure. In 1821 he sent the longer manuscript to a military journal, but it was not published until 1858 when the question was back on the political agenda.<sup>742</sup>

Gneisenau apparently sent a memorandum on the *Landwehr* to Hardenberg in December. This might have been Clausewitz's shorter text on the political benefits and drawbacks of *Landwehr*.<sup>743</sup> The *Kanzler* responded before Christmas that he now better understood the importance of the *Landwehr* for the state. He ensured Gneisenau that, despite rumours, the king's intention had never been to abolish this institution.<sup>744</sup> Gneisenau asked Clausewitz somewhat later if he might give *both* writings on the *Landwehr* to Major-general Job von Witzleben (1755-1837), the king's *Generaladjutant*, so he could make proper use of them.<sup>745</sup> The *Landwehr* question was an expression of the rising conflict between the military conservatives, 'the men of 1806' in Clausewitz's words, and those believing in the military force created by the reform and the War of Liberation. This conflict contributed to spoiling Clausewitz's diplomatic ambition.

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<sup>740</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 17 December 1819, the essay 'Ueber die politischen Vortheile und Nachteile der Preußischen Landwehr-Einrichtung', *Schriften* (1990), 367-72

<sup>741</sup> Clausewitz [December 1819 – January 1820], 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung', *Schriften* (1979), 277-99. Hahlweg dated the text to about 1819. First published in *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges*, Bd. 104 (1858), 42-67. The publisher dated the text to the end of 1819.

<sup>742</sup> See Hahlweg, 'Einleitung', *Schriften* (1966), 35. The reason why the text was not published in 1821-22 is not known.

<sup>743</sup> See Gneisenau to Hardenberg, Berlin ? December 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 401

<sup>744</sup> Hardenberg to Gneisenau, Berlin 22 December 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 401

<sup>745</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, 1 February 1820, Nachlaß Gneisenau A 27 cited by Hahlweg in *Schriften* (1990), 367, n.1. See Gneisenau to Hardenberg, Berlin ? December 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 401



Gneisenau had in May 1819 asked Clausewitz on behalf of Hardenberg whether he was interested to become Prussia's next envoy to Britain.<sup>746</sup> The position in London had been vacant since Humboldt had left Britain at the end of October 1818 to participate in the Congress of Aachen, where he also met Clausewitz.<sup>747</sup> Paret has suggested that Clausewitz, probably in Aachen, took the chance to discuss with Humboldt the possibility of succeeding him in London. He also mentioned an ambiguous dispatch from Sir George Henry Rose, Britain's minister in Berlin, of 1 January 1819. This included Clausewitz's name and suggested his interest in this position.<sup>748</sup>

But Clausewitz's reply to Gneisenau's proposition in May 1819 actually signalled amazement and gratitude for his friend's initiative: 'With a kind of astonishment, but at the same time with true emotion I have seen the proposition you have, I may say ventured, for my own benefit.'<sup>749</sup> Gneisenau's initiative showed, in Clausewitz's opinion, his inability to undertake career moves on his own in peacetime. He expressed doubt as to whether his personality was suitable for diplomatic life, but was grateful for Hardenberg's trust in him and happy to take on the challenge. Gneisenau sent this reply to the *Kanzler* and told him to see beyond Clausewitz's strict judgement of himself. If the envoy was to be a man with military knowledge there was none better than Clausewitz.<sup>750</sup>

Marie and Clausewitz visited Gneisenau at his new family estate of Erdmannsdorf in Silesia during their summer holiday in 1819. This became something of a tradition.<sup>751</sup> They also visited the battlefield of Katzbach in lower Silesia where Gneisenau and Blücher had won the first true Prussian victory on 26 August 1813. Clausewitz labelled the battlefield '*wunderschön*' because the battle fought there was easy to comprehend and required no squeezing to fit into a 'sensible theory'.<sup>752</sup>

Clausewitz's appointment to London was discussed in Berlin after the Congress of Karlsbad. Gneisenau approached Wilhelm von Humboldt at a dinner on 8 September to tell him the 'official secret' that Clausewitz was interested to become envoy to Britain. Humboldt already knew this but seemed to dislike Gneisenau, according to the

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<sup>746</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Berlin 12 May 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 370

<sup>747</sup> Wilhelm to Caroline v. Humboldt, Aachen 4 November 1818, *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in Ihren Briefen*, Vol 6, 363-71, cf. 369

<sup>748</sup> Peter Paret, 'A Proposition not a Solution', in *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 178- 90, cf. 181

<sup>749</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 14 May 1819, *Schriften* (1990), 361-62. "Mit einer Art von Erstaunen, aber zugleich mit wahrer Rührung habe ich gesehen welchen Vorschlag Sie, zu meinem Besten, ich darf sagen gewagt haben."

<sup>750</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, Berlin 16 May 1819, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 370-71

<sup>751</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 7 July 1819, *Schriften* (1990), 363-64

<sup>752</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Lignitz 18 August 1819, *Schriften* (1990), 364

tone of a letter to his wife.<sup>753</sup> Britain's envoy in Berlin, Rose, obviously played a key role in preventing the appointment.<sup>754</sup>

He had formed an impression of Clausewitz as politically unreliable, a Jacobin with democratic or even revolutionary tendencies; too dangerous to be placed in London. He had a vague understanding of him as a member or former member of the patriotic *Tugendbund* and as a close acquaintance of Görres in Koblenz. The British envoy apparently disliked Clausewitz's cool and reserved style, which made him difficult to understand and get acquainted with. This forced Rose 'to make his verdict from the judgement of others'.<sup>755</sup>

Rose had received information on Clausewitz from, among others, *Fürst* Ludwig Wittgenstein (1770-1850), secret *Staats- und Polizeiminister* in Prussia from May 1814 and more or less the personification of persecution. He was a man of great silent power in Prussia with a close relation to Metternich, described by Boyen as 'Prime Minister behind the curtain'.<sup>756</sup> Wittgenstein moved even deeper behind the curtain after the Karlsbader Decrees. He resigned as Minister of Police in October 1819 to become Minister of the Royal Household and a key member of the *Untersuchungskommission* responsible for the overall political control of Prussia as decided in the Karlsbader Decrees. Wittgenstein has been described as old-bureaucratic rather than politically old-fashioned.<sup>757</sup>

Britain's envoy spoke also to Friedrich Ancillon (1767-1837), secret councillor of legation in the department of foreign affairs. He was a historian and had been tutor to the crown prince along with Clausewitz in 1810. Rose realized that the statements on Clausewitz's political tendencies may have been exaggerated, but regarded them nevertheless as containing some truth. Rose described Clausewitz and Gneisenau as members of the moderate military party and as such considered to be deserters by the vehement military party.<sup>758</sup>

The question of military constitution was tightly bound up with that of the state constitution in general. Wittgenstein and Ancillon belonged politically to the '*Hofpartei*', who found Hardenberg's *Politik* too liberal. They wanted to restore the old constitution of provinces instead of the *Kanzler's* proposition of a constitution of estates. Another member of that party was Lieutenant-general Knesebeck, the king's *Generaladjutant* and strategic advisor during the War of Liberation. He was then labelled '*Der Lange Mann*' and disdained by Gneisenau and Clausewitz due to his

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<sup>753</sup> Wilhelm to Caroline v. Humboldt, Berlin 8 September 1819, *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in Ihren Briefen*, Vol 6, 610-13

<sup>754</sup> See also Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol2/2, 255; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 319-23

<sup>755</sup> See the documents cited in Paret, 'A Proposition not a Solution', *Understanding War*, 178-90

<sup>756</sup> Cited in Meinecke, *Boyen*, Vol 2/2, 311

<sup>757</sup> Bruno Gebhardt, 'Wittgenstein, Wilhelm Ludwig Georg', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 43 (1898), 626-29 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118804928.html?anchor=adb> accessed 11 November 2011

<sup>758</sup> Rose in November 1819 cited in Paret, 'A Proposition not a Solution', in *Understanding War*, 182

arrogance and his faulty strategic judgement. He was in that sense a man of 1806, thinking strategy from a limited point of view, dominated by logistics and lines of communication. At the Congress of Vienna he profiled himself as a firm opponent of the military reformers and their liberal military ideas.<sup>759</sup>

Wittgenstein had already in 1815 put key reformers, such as Boyen and Gneisenau, under secret-police surveillance.<sup>760</sup> Gneisenau's staff on the Rhine had been pejoratively labelled '*Wallenstein's Lager* in Koblenz' by the conservatives. It was therefore not strange that Clausewitz's diplomatic mission was disputed and an investigation by the *Untersuchungskommission* was opened in November 1819 against Gröben. This was because a suspected note from 1816 had been found in Görres' home after he had escaped from Prussia.<sup>761</sup>

Gneisenau was at the same time personally accused of a connection to a Christian German society, which made him furious.<sup>762</sup> He again used the short evaluation Clausewitz had made of Görres in December 1817 to prove his and his associates trustworthiness to Hardenberg and the king.<sup>763</sup> Clausewitz begged his passionate friend to keep cool in spite of being under iniquitous attack.<sup>764</sup> Gneisenau addressed Hardenberg formally in the case of Gröben already the next day and received an instant reply that he had been informally exonerated.<sup>765</sup> Clausewitz was happy at how Gröben's case turned out.<sup>766</sup>

Gneisenau suggested to the *Kanzler* that his position as governor of Berlin should be closed to cut expenditure. His reason was not patriotic, but personal, to get away from nasty people as he told Hardenberg.<sup>767</sup> The suggestion was quickly ratified by royal decree on 12 February 1820.<sup>768</sup> The conservative party was briefly successful in the months after the Karlsbader Decrees. The institution of *Landwehr*, the pet project of the reformers, was under scrutiny followed by the resignations of Boyen and Grolman. The former had informed Clausewitz that Ancillon was working against his diplomatic

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<sup>759</sup> Günter Richter, 'Knesebeck, Karl Friedrich von dem', in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 12 (1979), 179 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116253665.html> accessed on 11 November 2011

<sup>760</sup> Meinecke, *Boyen*, Vol 2/2, 311

<sup>761</sup> See the correspondende Gröben to Gneisenau, Breslau 24 November 1819; Gneisenau to Gröben, Berlin 4 December 1819; Gröben to Gneisenau, 8 December 1819; Gneisenau to Gröben, Berlin 11 December 1819; Gröben to Gneisenau, Breslau 8 January 1820; Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 394-97, 405-06; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 14 January 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 374-76

<sup>762</sup> Gneisenau to Gröben, Berlin 1 January 1820, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 402-404

<sup>763</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, 2 January 1820, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 405

<sup>764</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 14 January 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 374-76

<sup>765</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, Berlin 15 January 1820; Hardenberg to Gneisenau, Berlin 15 January; Gneisenau to Gröben, Berlin 15 January 1820, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 409-12

<sup>766</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 15 January 1820, *Schriften* (1820), 376

<sup>767</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, Berlin 22 January 1820, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 417-19

<sup>768</sup> See Hahlweg's note 2 in *Schriften* (1990), 377

mission, which came as no surprise. Clausewitz's contempt for the conservative aristocracy, 'the men of 1806', was clearly spelled out in the political defence of the *Landwehr* at Christmas 1819.

Only grand buildings of real forces, permeated by a living spirit, can maintain us at our level [in Europe]; not empty forms such as we had prior to 1806; not the reverberation of glory that becomes weaker every year. Our modern history has whispered this to us too clearly, word-by-word, so we cannot overlook it if we possess the slightest desire for truth. In that manner the men of 1806, who seek salvation in the decayed forms of that time, fancy they can answer all the questions we have made perfectly clear to them, and then feel the enormous responsibility that they with outrageous recklessness, with a hand trained only to blame, demolish the building of our grand fortune through the years of 1813, 14 and 15 as a goddess of victory rested in her chariot.<sup>769</sup>

The political game seemed in that sense clear to Clausewitz. Grolman's resignation had opened an 'unexpected back door' for the conservative party. Clausewitz realized that if he was appointed chief of the general staff as successor to Grolman it would be a non-acceptable setback to the conservatives. The same applied to his desire for a diplomatic mission, according to the counter-measures taken.<sup>770</sup> The conservatives' offensive ambition to seize power from the reformers and remove liberal military ideas was indeed well under way in 1820. Gneisenau was told that a diplomatic mission was still possible if the pressure from outside stopped, so Clausewitz apparently still had hope for a career even under conservative rule.<sup>771</sup>

This real conflict about Prussia's future helps one to understand theoretical standpoints taken in *Vom Kriege*. Prussia's defence and chance to remain a larger power between France and Russia relied on a committed army that could fight outnumbered and prevail.

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<sup>769</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 17 December 1819, including the essay 'Ueber die politischen Vortheile und Nachteile der Preußischen Landwehr-Einrichtung', *Schriften* (1990), 367-72, cf. 372. 'Nur großartige Einrichtungen von reellen Kräften, von lebendigem Geist durchdrungen können uns auf unsere Stufe erharlten; nicht leere Formen Formen wie wir sie vor 1806 hatten; nicht der Nachhall des Ruhmes der in jedem Jahr schwächer wird. Unsere eigne neuere Geschichte hat uns das Wort vor Wort zu deutlich vorgesagt, als daß wir es übersehen könnten, wenn in uns das mindeste Streben nach wahrheit ist. So mögen den die Männer von 1806, welche das Heil in den verfallenen Formen jener Zeit suchen alle die Fragen welche wir hier gethan haben ihrem Gewissen redlich vorlegen, und denn die ungeheure Verantwortlichkeit fühlen daß sie mit frevhaftem Leichtsinne die vielleicht nur in Tadeln geübte Hand an die Zertümmerung eines Gebäudes legen, auf dem unser großartiges Schicksal durch die jahre 1813, 14 und 15 wie eines Sieges Göttin auf ihrem Streitwagen geruht hat.'

<sup>770</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 18 December 1819, *Schriften* (1990), 372-73

<sup>771</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 20 January 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 373-74

## UMTRIEBE

Some time after the Karlsbader Decrees Clausewitz wrote a long essay entitled *Umtriebe* about the current political turmoil, which criticized the aristocracy and the present persecutions. Agitating or secret political movements with revolutionary tendencies that intersected the political life of Prussia and the German states after 1815 were labelled '*Demagogischen Umtriebe*' or just '*Umtriebe*'.<sup>772</sup> The usually politically well-informed diplomat Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858) wrote in his diary on 20 December that Prince Karl had pinpointed four '*Hauptumtrieber*' in Gneisenau, Grolman, Schleiermacher and Carl von Savigny.<sup>773</sup>

The latter was a member of the *Staatsrath* and had been deeply involved in the incorporation of the Rhine provinces. Savigny later became one of the most influential historians and jurists of the nineteenth century, writing jurisprudence from historical studies.<sup>774</sup> That was in a way not unlike Clausewitz, who theorized strategy from historical case studies of the Great Captains.

The text *Umtriebe* was probably written in close connection with the conflict over the military constitution, thus around 1820.<sup>775</sup> Clausewitz tried to contextualize the present situation by tracing the historical causes over a long period. In the end he argued similarly to Gneisenau that the threat to society and the present order was very limited. This made the persecution of political and patriotic movements counterproductive. Clausewitz told Gneisenau in October 1820 that the political situation in Berlin was now calm and uneventful. There was hardly any talk of '*Umtriebe*' any more, which suggests a time of writing before this date.<sup>776</sup> He observed however the rising bitterness among the nobility over what had happened in Prussia since 1806. Everything was expressed in stereotypes; people in general were passive and the movements for change had also ceased, so the situation he characterized as '*wider Tribe noch Umtriebe*'.<sup>777</sup>

The text was somewhat fragmentary, which indicated it was written over some time and not edited. Clausewitz outlined, in about nine analytical steps and from his political point of view, the historical causes of the present turmoil. The first part

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<sup>772</sup> See '*Umtriebe*' in *Brockhaus Bilder-Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol 4 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1841), 516-17 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000872458> accessed on 7 November 2011

<sup>773</sup> Varnhagen v. Ense, diary entry 20 December 1819, *Aus dem Nachlasse Varnhagen von Ense, Blätter aus der preußische Geschichte*, Vol 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1868), 27-28

<sup>774</sup> Dieter Nörr, 'Savigny, Friedrich Carl von', in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 22 (2005), 470-73 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118605909.html> accessed on 25 November 2011

<sup>775</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], '*Umtriebe*', *Schriften* (1922), 153-95; dated by Rothfels to 1819–1823? Also available in Clausewitz, '*Agitation*', *Historical and Political Writings*, 335-68; dated by Paret & Moran to the early 1820s. An interpretation is available in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 261-67

<sup>776</sup> This situation might indicate that Clausewitz wrote "*Umtriebe*" soon after the turmoil in December 1819 and January 1820, thus in the first part of 1820.

<sup>777</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 23 October 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 387-90

analysed the old role of the nobility and the rise of a free middle class. The interest of the nobility in the feudal order had been war, which had made them automatically the backbone of defence. The nobility had acquired and maintained property by the sword. They had in this order of society a free position indeed, with far-reaching rights over their subjects and few obligations towards the prince. Their earning by the sword was however misused and was stopped.

Since the nobility could not earn their living without the sword, they had reached their 'culmination point', which forced many of them to turn to government administration. However the nobility lacked proper understanding of economics, which led to wastefulness. Industrial acquisition was not part of their ideas, which left room for a new free social class. The middle class was predicated on the ambition to increase their property by clever application. The working class followed, and as a consequence the farmers were liberated from being pure vassals of the nobility. The rise of the state as the supreme power had in fact occurred in the previous hundred years along with the rise of science.<sup>778</sup>

The French Revolution had two main causes according to Clausewitz. The first originated in the tension between social classes due to the nobility's great advantages and independence. The second cause was the dishonest, partial and extravagant government administration. The scale of events caused by the revolution in France had a profound impact on neighbouring countries. The situation in the German states was however very different from France, according to Clausewitz. The connections between the German states were extremely loose, thus by nature quite similar since the Middle Ages.

Only two monarchs of the Hohenzollern dynasty had been prodigal, Friedrich I and Friedrich Wilhelm II; thrifty. The philosophers of right and morality had achieved a prominent position due to the weak government of Friedrich Wilhelm II, 1786-1797. The cruelty of the revolutionary war had in due time weakened their affection for the *Grundsätze* brought forward by the revolution. The fear of France's aggressive aspirations had finally closed the 'philosophical argument', in Clausewitz's opinion. The German people were in this process naturally united by patriotic feeling to fight for independence, which can be compared to the *Urbestimmung* and natural war.<sup>779</sup>

The destruction of French preponderance in 1815 had opened up for the '*Umtriebe des deutschen Volkes*'. The end of hostilities had left plenty of political energy. The educated people had nurtured a desire for action to achieve two political aspirations. The first aspiration for German unification was rejected as childish and ridiculous. The German states had indeed fought and defeated France together but that was not the same as abandoning political independence for a German Republic.<sup>780</sup> The second aspiration was a new constitution, which represented all classes.

Liberal German youth was filled with energy after the war and unhappy with its elders' division of power. It was the people more than the princes who had defeated

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<sup>778</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], '*Umtriebe*', *Schriften* (1922), cf.153-63

<sup>779</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], '*Umtriebe*', *Schriften* (1922), cf.164-69

<sup>780</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], '*Umtriebe*', *Schriften* (1922), cf.169-71

Bonaparte. German youth took some extravagant action, such as the student festival in Wartburg in 1817 and the murder of Kotzebue in 1819. There was however no risk of a revolution in Germany compared with the situation in France, due to the temper of the German people and the political reforms since 1805. The unhappiness had been treated as a threat to power followed by persecutions and political ambivalence, which had fuelled the unhappiness. A modern constitution should, in Clausewitz's, opinion, rely on individual ability and honest behaviour along with warm public participation in the larger interests of Prussia.<sup>781</sup>

Görres had acted in this context as if he had been part of a revolution. His texts had mixed passion, philosophy and scientific claims, but his propositions lacked common sense and were remote from the practical world. His aim remained unclear and his morality was in doubtful conflict with political passion.<sup>782</sup> Unhappy young academics had demanded political rebirth in 1818, but neither they nor their liberal professors could spell out what they wanted to achieve. The Congress of Karlsbad had thus tried to steer an elusive spirit in vain, since there was no risk of a revolution and the ambition to unite Germany was childish. The problem of the Rhine provinces was exaggerated because of a few loud voices not representative of the majority.<sup>783</sup>

Clausewitz pointed finally to the crucial role of Austria and Metternich as 'the guardian of the human spirit', as facilitator of the Karlsbader Decrees. The Austrian Minister had become suspicious of Prussia's new approach to war during the campaigns of 1813-15, which he regarded as too 'democratic'. Blücher and the Prussian high command had consistently chosen to fight in their own theatre of war, separated from the main bulk of the coalition to escape the political bargaining surrounding the course of the action. Blücher's unexpected decision to march towards Paris on 23 February 1814 had in that sense been regarded as political disobedience and contrary to the strategy of limited aim pursued by Austria. This had in Clausewitz's opinion formed a view of the Prussian high command 'as a state within the state'. This spirit of independence and the *Landwehr* of the reformed army were seen by Metternich and his peers as 'horrible institutes' in times of revolution.

The suspicious feeling towards Prussia had become even stronger at the Congress of Vienna. Metternich's 'petty-minded policy' about Prussia's acquirement of Saxony to limit its future size and power had caused a Prussian general (likely Gneisenau, or Grolman) to write a letter of complaint to the Austrian Minister. The general had bitterly stated that the Prussian Army would never surrender if a state insisted on refusing Prussia her well-deserved rewards. Metternich had accused the reforms in Prussia of being in reality a shield for revolutionary *Umtriebe*. This standpoint was rooted in his view of the Prussian military as politically unreliable and too independent, thus military Jacobins. Clausewitz concluded that Metternich had easily found in the Prussian aristocracy, eager to rise again, his means to fight the Prussian *Umtriebe*.<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>781</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], 'Umtriebe', *Schriften* (1922), cf.170-79

<sup>782</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], 'Umtriebe', *Schriften* (1922), cf.179-83

<sup>783</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], 'Umtriebe', *Schriften* (1922), cf.182-93

<sup>784</sup> Clausewitz [After September 1819-20], 'Umtriebe', *Schriften* (1922), cf.194-95

The affair of Clausewitz's diplomatic mission continued unresolved during 1820. Varnhagen von Ense noted in his diary that Wittgenstein and his associate Herzog Karl von Mecklenburg were working against the appointment. One had to consider '*die demagogische Sache*' a bit more strictly than before they had told the king.<sup>785</sup> The head of the king's *militärcabinet*, Major-general Job von Witzleben, was noted by Ense as the most influential person in Prussia at the time. His close daily relation with Friedrich Wilhelm had turned into friendship. Witzleben had a say in all questions, not only military, until he died. Clausewitz knew him and he blocked the most extreme plans of the conservatives. This turmoil also caused the crown prince to expand his political ambitions to the extent that Hardenberg grew irritated.<sup>786</sup> In short, the political life of Prussia at this time was a very complex rivalry between personal conflicts and different ideologies, mirrored in the difficulty to settle Clausewitz's diplomatic mission.

Gneisenau spent the summer holiday of 1820 in Silesia. Clausewitz told Gneisenau that he was his only true friend. Back in Berlin they were invited to Foreign Minister Bernstorff for a family dinner, but Bernstorff had nothing new to reveal about the diplomatic mission. The two families developed a close friendship during the 1820s. Bernstorff told Clausewitz about Austria's impending intervention to block revolutionary uprisings in Naples, which was the subject of a political summit between the monarchs of Austria and Russia. Prussia was represented by the crown prince and Hardenberg at the Conference of Troppau. But the fact that Prussia's king had not been invited from the start indicated a crack in the Holy Alliance of 1815. This was perhaps a consequence of Metternich's view of Prussia as militarily unreliable. The final protocol was not signed by Britain, and this also expanded the political gulf between the Great Powers. Clausewitz's later notes on the defence of Naples in 1821 remain unpublished.<sup>787</sup>

The only comfort Clausewitz found in the late summer of 1820 was tranquillity to spend more time with his books.<sup>788</sup> Prince August contacted him later in the autumn. He had written an essay about the *Landwehr* and wanted his former adjutant's comments. August was nephew to Friedrich II and one of the largest landowners in Prussia, with great interest in things military. Clausewitz felt reluctant because he disagreed with some of the prince's standpoints. He asked Gneisenau for advice, but

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<sup>785</sup> See Varnhagen von Ense diary entry for 23 February 1820, *Blätter aus der preußische Geschichte*, Vol 1, 86-87. See also the entries for 16 January, 11 March, 23 March, 19 April, 1 May, 7 May, 8 July and 31 July 1820 about the uncertainty of Clausewitz's appointment.

<sup>786</sup> Varnhagen von Ense diary entry for 1 May 1820, *Blätter aus der preußische Geschichte*, Vol 1, 86-87. See also Bernhard v. Poten, 'Witzleben, Karl Ernst Job', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 43 (1898), 675-77 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd117445614.html?anchor=adb> accessed on 24 November 2011

<sup>787</sup> Clausewitz [1821 or later], 'Über die Verteidigung von Neaple 1821', on the list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* 1889, printed in *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74

<sup>788</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 21 August 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 379-83



decided to spell out his opinion anyway.<sup>789</sup> The two seemingly maintained a good and stable relation over the years, even when Clausewitz was out in the cold.

Gneisenau was apparently depressed about how things were developing in 1820, but stated that if he was given a new war command he would demand Clausewitz as his chief of general staff. He considered Clausewitz the most suitable for the position and should succeed Grolman permanently. The position was being handled by Rüle von Lillienstern.<sup>790</sup> But the conservatives once more gained the upper hand and Lieutenant-general Karl *Freiherr* v. Müffling (1775-1851) was appointed permanent chief of the general staff on 11 January 1821.

Müffling and Gneisenau had different professional opinions about strategy, which had evoked hot disputes during the campaigns of 1813-1815. After the war Müffling was so afraid these disputes had turned into a personal conflict that he contacted the hot-blooded Gneisenau to clear the air.<sup>791</sup> Müffling had also spent some time with Clausewitz in Koblenz in 1816 to make a new military map for the Rhine area. At the Congress of Aachen Gneisenau was told that '*Freund Müffling*' seemed to be scheduled for promotion. Clausewitz labelled him 'a pupa awaiting the time to rise as a multi-coloured butterfly', which obviously was a correct judgement.<sup>792</sup> Clausewitz seems to have been well aware of the game of promotions and appointments in the army.

In his own case he frequently ruled out the possibility of getting the diplomatic mission to Britain.<sup>793</sup> At the same time he hoped for a solution and Gneisenau continued to work for him.<sup>794</sup> Finally at the end of September 1821 Bernstorff was formally asked to investigate his case with Hardenberg, since Clausewitz had knowledge of an impending cabinet order from the king regarding the appointment.<sup>795</sup> The request was never answered and he wrote in suppressed anger a second letter about his dilemma. Clausewitz was fully aware of the opposition to his appointment, but the king was already involved so he could not just drop the case and he had no desire to fail Gneisenau's kindness. Clausewitz disliked being a subject of criticism, not least since it was not himself that had put forward this proposition from the beginning.<sup>796</sup> Finally, however, the mission to Britain was given to a conservative career diplomat.

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<sup>789</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 30 December 1820, amended 'Bemerkungen zum Aufsatz des Prinzen August von Preußen über die preußische Landwehr', *Schriften* (1990), 396-99

<sup>790</sup> See Gneisenau to Clausewitz, 9 September 1820, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 440-42

<sup>791</sup> Müffling to Gneisenau, Paris 15 February 1816; Gneisenau to Müffling, Koblenz 25 March 1816, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 84-90

<sup>792</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Aachen 30 October 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 354-56

<sup>793</sup> See for example Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 16 September 1820, *Schriften* (1990), 383-87

<sup>794</sup> Gneisenau to Hardenberg, 29 May 1821, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 459

<sup>795</sup> Clausewitz to Bernstorff, Berlin 30 September 1821, Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 255-56

<sup>796</sup> Clausewitz to Bernstorff, Undated letter, Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 256-58

Ense noted that this appointment was a victory for Bernstorff over Hardenberg.<sup>797</sup> He probably overstated their rivalry. Clausewitz believed he had the trust of the minister as well as the *Kanzler* since he was acquainted with them both. But he might well have overstated the strength of their support in the political maelstrom. Bernstorff had the conservative Ancillon as his closest colleague, who openly counteracted Clausewitz. Hardenberg closely followed Metternich's counter-revolutionary policy and the Austrian minister had on principle no faith in liberal Prussian generals. The conservatives were on the offensive, which might have forced Bernstorff to drop Clausewitz's case, at least temporarily.

At the same time Gneisenau was being attacked again. A new high-level investigation was opened against him in the autumn of 1821 on the suspicion of revolutionary activity.<sup>798</sup> Bernstorff tried to appoint Clausewitz to a new diplomatic mission to Munich in the autumn of 1823, which was also turned down by the king.<sup>799</sup> According to Varnhagen von Ense the reason for this refusal was Clausewitz's way of thinking, which was judged 'too liberal'.<sup>800</sup> This event marked the end of Clausewitz's diplomatic ambition, and might have been the trigger for him to finally write the larger coherent piece on strategy.

#### FRIEDRICH'S STRATEGY

The analysis of Friedrich's strategy clearly resembles in style and topics addressed in the texts on the wars of Louis XIV.<sup>801</sup> The predominant interpretation has been that Clausewitz made his study of Friedrich's campaigns in the early 1820s.<sup>802</sup> I have pondered a somewhat earlier date closer to the studies of the wars of Louis XIV, but stay with the early 1820s as a reasonable time. The study was framed to support his preferred naturalistic approach to strategy, as can be traced in for example his severe criticism of Lloyd's and Tempelhoff's influential accounts of the Seven Years' War as the root of the current poverty of Prussian military thought.<sup>803</sup>

Clausewitz attacked Lloyd directly in the opening passages on the Seven Years' War by labelling him the origin and epitome of false military theory. He obviously disliked

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<sup>797</sup> Varnhagen v. Ense diary entry for 8 October 1821, *Blätter aus der preußische Geschichte*, Vol 1/5, 352

<sup>798</sup> See Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 462-65

<sup>799</sup> Bernstorff to Clausewitz, 21 November 1823, Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol 2/2, 258

<sup>800</sup> Varnhagen v. Ense diary entry for 12 October 1823, *Blätter aus der preußische Geschichte*, Vol 2/5, 424

<sup>801</sup> Clausewitz [1818-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10 (1837), 29-254

<sup>802</sup> Rothfels interpreted the date to early 1820 in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1922), 195. The same time was stated in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 330; Paret stated also early 1820s in Clausewitz, *Historical and Military Writings*, 19-21. I have, however, never seen any conclusive evidence for the time.

<sup>803</sup> G.F. v. Tempelhof, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges in Deutschland zwischen dem Könige von Preußen und der Kaiserin Königen mit ihren Alliierten als eine Fortsetzung der Geschichte des General Lloyd*, 6 Vols. (Berlin: Unger, 1783-1801)

Lloyd's theoretical elevation of military genius and his key concepts such as lines of operation and decisive points. This compartmentalised way of thinking explained everything by genius or secret geometrical combinations. The academic officers of previous generations had been swept away by the Enlightenment way of thinking, in Clausewitz opinion; unable to resist the intellectual attraction of these systems for ensuring success.

Friedrich's conduct of war was not at all based on lines and angles, in Clausewitz's interpretation. The conduct of the early campaigns was interpreted as conforming easily to the king's political plans. For example, the campaign of 1744 was singled out as having a political nature: never had strategy been so close to *Politik*, in Clausewitz's opinion. Friedrich limited his ambitions and switched from the offensive to the defensive wisely. The role of smaller strategic circumstances and other traditions affecting performance was also recognized as influential to his way of conducting a war.<sup>804</sup>

The only event during the Seven Years' War close to the violent far-reaching levels of newer times had been the Battle of Prague in May 1757. Friedrich had attacked with aim and means in a coherent inner necessity despite numerical inferiority. Clausewitz condemned previous faulty interpretations of these events.<sup>805</sup> The Battle of Kay on 23 July 1759, cited in the opening of this chapter, was used to support his preferred naturalistic approach to the conduct of war, which underlined the role of tactical victory achieved rather than any complex patterns.<sup>806</sup> Clausewitz's criticism of Lloyd is instructive regarding his fundamental objections and way of analysing:

The critical observations and judgements of General Lloyd are a pattern for every false theory that has come down to our time. If one goes through these observations in detail with a reason used to *logische Gesetzmäßigkeit* [conformity of logical laws] and *Zusammenhang des Urteils* [coherence of judgement], then there is perhaps not one single *Vorstellung* there that must not be rejected. Everything is completely groundless and conditional, although always put forward with the pretension to theoretical necessity. These stupidities have reproduced themselves down to our time, the scholarly Militaire have been unable to resist the attraction of demonstrating a particular importance of single lines and points, and when they had made up their minds in this way, they advanced [their propositions] with a mysterious expression as the magnitude it [the conduct of war] mainly depends on, and which importance genius alone could recognize.

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<sup>804</sup> Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf. 29-45

<sup>805</sup> Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf. 54-55

<sup>806</sup> Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf. 115-16

They were averse to developing their convictions for true coherence, because they feared that practical intellectual proficiency, sound common sense that could find all kinds of fault attached; or else a sharp philosophical critique could throw everything into disarray and so they preferred to consider it as the revelation and new view of genius. This way of thinking and judging has constituted our entire theory, and General Lloyd was perhaps one of the first to muster these stupidities.<sup>807</sup>

January 1821 saw Clausewitz studying the battle of Marengo, where Bonaparte had defeated an Austrian Army on 14 June 1800. He had borrowed the plan and geographical information from Gneisenau. The battle was in his opinion a striking example to prove the shortcomings of separating the arms of infantry and cavalry, thus the single-arm approach to tactics.<sup>808</sup> He may have written the piece on an 'Organic organisation of the Forces' as a reflection on this study. It concerned similar standpoints regarding the use of cavalry and the need for a military organisation to be based on combined arms if the command approach was to foster great independence. This can be compared to the growth of mission command.<sup>809</sup> These ideas surfaced later in Book 5 of *Vom Kriege* in the part on the order of battle.<sup>810</sup>

When Clausewitz left Koblenz in December 1818 he had left the direct affairs of the general staff, but he was re-instated on 6 May 1821 (*dem Generalstab aggregiert*).<sup>811</sup> Two weeks later, he was in Potsdam on a field exercise and sent Marie a letter, which is the only remaining fragment of their correspondence between August 1815 and March 1831. The tempo of the exercise was apparently rather slow and he had time to

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<sup>807</sup> Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf. 46-48. 'Die Kritischen Betrachtungen und Urteile des Generals Lloyd sind ein Muster jener falchen Theorie, die sich bis in unsere Zeiten hineinzieht. Wollte man mit einem an logische Gesetzmäßigkeit und einen Zusammenhang des Urteils gewöhnten Verstand diese Betrachtungen genau durchgehen, so giebt es vielleicht nicht einen einzige Vorstellung in derselben, die nicht verworfen werden müßte. Alles ist völlig grundlos und willkürlich, obgleich immer mit dem Ansehn einer theoretischen Nothwendigkeit hingestellt... Diese Thorheiten haben sich bis auf unsere Zeiten fortgepflanzt, die gelehrten Militaire haben dem Reiz nicht widerstehen können, sich für einzelne Punkte und Linen eine besondere Wichtigkeit herauszudemonstrieren und wenn sie auf diese Weise mit ihrer eignen Überzeugung fertig waren, sie mit geheimnißvoller Miene als diejenige Größen aufzustellen, auf die es hauptsächlich ankomme, und deren Wichtigkeit nur das Genie erkennen könne. Sie fühlten einen Widerwillen den wahren zusammenhang ihrer Überzeugung auseinander zu legen, weil ihnen doch unheimlich dabei zu Muthe war, der Gesunde Menschenverstand könnte allerhand daran auszusetzen finden, oder eine scharfe philosophische Kritik Alles über den haufenwerfen und so hielten sie es denn gern für die Offenbarung und neue Anschauung des Genies. Diese Art zu denken und zu urteilen hat unsere ganze theorie ausgemacht, und der General Lloyd ist vielleicht einer der ersten gewesen, welcher diese Thorheit aufgebracht hat.'

<sup>808</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 30 January 1821, *Schriften* (1990), 399-401

<sup>809</sup> Clausewitz [1821?], 'Über die organische Einteilung der Streitkräfte', amended to *Vom Kriege*, 1087-96. Compare Dirk W. Oetting, *Auftragstaktik – Geschichte und Gegenwart einer Führungskonzeption* (Frankfurt an Main: Report Verlag GmbH, 1993), 27-96

<sup>810</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Schlachtordnung des Heers', *Vom Kriege* 5:5, 518-24

<sup>811</sup> Priesdorff, 'No 1429 Karl Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz', *Soldatisches Führertum*, Vol 5/10, 66

visit the old family house where he had lived before entering the army in 1792. Alone in the small hotel room he had also time to think about his career and the absence of great success. In melancholic spirit he hoped his career path would rise and reach a higher 'culmination point' since he was not tired enough and wanted to work more before being ready 'to go to sleep'.<sup>812</sup> In the years to come Clausewitz also acted as arbitrator in the annual autumn exercises. This kept him aware of the tactical standard though he seemed to find the task boring.

During the summer vacation of 1821 Clausewitz visited the battlefields of Dresden and Kulm, where Napoleon had won an initial victory but failed to conclude with pursuit at the end of August 1813.<sup>813</sup> He regarded the battlefield tour as doubly valuable since he was going to continue the tutorial for the crown prince.<sup>814</sup> Clausewitz had earlier expressed his difficulty to imagine a tactical situation on the map and preferred to see the real area, which made it easier for him to speak and write about the events.

Gneisenau was told in October 1822 that Major-general Valentini had published the third part of his work '*Die Lehre vom Krieg*', which addressed wars of the Turks. The list of contents looked grand but the actual contents were a pettiness in Clausewitz's opinion.<sup>815</sup> Valentini had failed as chief of the general staff in Bülow's 4 Army Corps in the Campaign of 1815. He was blamed for the Prussian failure to join forces before the battle of Ligny in 1815, immediately before Waterloo. This had at the time infuriated Clausewitz in the neighbouring 3 Corps.

After Waterloo Gneisenau had informed Boyen of Valentini's shortcomings; he was judged as too lazy, not able to overcome the past and too interested in forms rather than results. Valentini was consequently in Gneisenau's opinion not suitable for future war command.<sup>816</sup> Clausewitz insisted on calling Valentini '*der Schulmeister*' and was indeed not fond of his colleague's writings. He told Gneisenau that he had deliberately avoided the schoolmaster's two previous books on war.<sup>817</sup>

This time, however, Clausewitz had found an interesting fragment on the campaigns of 1810-1811. Gneisenau was told that war against the Turks was not different from any other war, even though Valentini insisted on precisely this point. The Turks displayed more of a rare naive stupidity, which proved the current decline in their war

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<sup>812</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Potsdam 18 May 1821, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 409-11

<sup>813</sup> The battle of Dresden 26-27 August 1813; the battle of Kulm 29-30 August 1813

<sup>814</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Dresden 2 August 1821, *Schriften* (1990), 404-5

<sup>815</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 5 October 1822, *Schriften* (1990), 411-16

<sup>816</sup> Bernhard v. Poten, 'Valentini, Georg Wilhelm Freiherr von', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 39 (1895), 465-68 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd115666656.html?anchor=adb> accessed on 8 December 2011; See also on Valentini: Königl. Generalstab, 'Nekrolog', *Militair Wochenblatt*, No 949 (Berlin: 30 August, 1834), 5207-08

<sup>817</sup> Georg Wilhelm v. Valentini, *Die Lehre vom Krieg*, Vol 1/3 'Der Kleine Krieg und die Gefechtlehre' (Berlin: Boicke, 1820); Vol 2/3 'Der Krieg im Großen-Abhandlung über den Krieg, in Beziehung auf große Operationen, mit Rücksicht auf die neuern Kriege' (Berlin: Boicke, 1821); Vol 3/3 *Der Türkenkrieg* (Berlin: Boicke, 1822)

institutions.<sup>818</sup> Clausewitz wrote two short analyses of war against the Turks, but focused on their successful opponents. These texts may have been inspired by Valentini's work and developed as a fragmentary counter-argument. The Asian way of war was like the European way of war: this underpinned Clausewitz's analytical point of view; that war had a discernible conceptual logic in the warlike element, which could be used to better calculate an effort.

The first of the two texts was a short overview of the Russian campaigns of 1736-39 against the Turks, conducted by Field Marshal Burkhard Christoph Graf von Münich (1683-1767).<sup>819</sup> He was a Danish-German military engineer who had served in the armies of France, Hessen and Saxony before entering the Russian Army. Münich was known as a military reformer of the Russian Army before going to war against the Turks in 1734-39. Clausewitz noted the battle of Stavuchany in August 1739 as the only event in four succeeding campaigns worth calling a battle. The Russians had lost about 70 casualties while the Turkish army imploded and escaped in disorder. This made peace possible, so the single battle was consequently decisive even though it was not as bloody as the Napoleonic battles. Hardly surprisingly, the study illuminated the importance of combat, which was a cornerstone of Clausewitz's 'natural theory'.

The second text analysed the last Polish warrior-king Jan III Sobiesky (1629-96) who had fought the Turks successfully in the second part of the seventeenth century.<sup>820</sup> Clausewitz projected the Polish warrior king as a prime exponent of the naturalist approach, with strategic combinations built on decisive combats. This way of conduct had made success both more probable and greater. Sobiesky had displayed decisive fighting in a higher form, where boldness took the place of the calculus. The word '*Kalkül*' was sometimes employed in a pejorative tone to describe the scholarly-strategic estimate of clever *a priori* combinations. Sobiesky's splendid performances, even if they were in smaller circumstances, were worth consideration as an epitome.

The weaknesses of Sobiesky's enemies were identified as being mostly strategic. Their effort had been inconsistent, an '*unzusammenhängenden Kraftanstrengung*'. That meant that the use of forces and their tactical results were poorly connected. The forces were not concentrated and favourable situations not exploited, a shortcoming Clausewitz regarded as typical also of other Asian people. The Asiatic commanders, Sobiesky's enemies, were also incapable of understanding this as the cause of their

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<sup>818</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 5 October 1822, *Schriften* (1990), 411-16 cf. 415-16

<sup>819</sup> Clausewitz [1822-23 ?], 'Feldmarschall Münich – Krieg der Russen gegen die Türken von 1736-1739', *Werke* Vol 10/10 (1837), 15-28. The date of writing was stated to 1801-04 in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 85 n.14. This seems not correct. It is more likely the short study was made in the context I suggest here.

<sup>820</sup> Clausewitz [1822-23 ?], 'Sobiesky', *Werke*, Vol 10/10, 3-14. The text was dated to 1829-30 in Caemmerer, *Clausewitz*, 77; the same was stated in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 343. Caemmerer noted that Clausewitz had used a source published in 1829 as proof for the time. This source seems however to have been referred to by Gröben, who edited the text in 1836-37.

strategic ineffectiveness.<sup>821</sup> The inner coherence of effort was on the contrary a major feature of Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy, which he would elaborate in detail.

The short studies on the successful opponents of the Turks more or less underpinned Clausewitz's view of war and the warlike element. The Asian way of war in that sense resembled the European. Europeans were simply better at achieving a coherent effort, which could be theorized and seen as an implicit counter-argument to Valentini but also as a motivation to go on with the larger work *Vom Kriege* to put forward a new standpoint on the theory of conducting war.

## CRITICIZING THE MEN OF 1806

Kanzler Hardenberg died at the Congress of Verona on 26 November 1822. Clausewitz had no hope this would cause any great political change and described his departure by reversing a *bon mot* from Talleyrand: 'he took more space than the emptiness he left behind'.<sup>822</sup> Gneisenau and Clausewitz worked in 1823 to arrange a monument to Scharnhorst, to which the king agreed.<sup>823</sup> The movement of Scharnhorst's body from Prague to the *Invalidenfriedhof* in Berlin was organised by his former student in September 1826.<sup>824</sup>

The Clausewitz family lived a quiet and easy life in Berlin during the 1820s, in *Burgstraße*. They met the Bernstorffs a couple of times a week and walked in the *Thiergarten* with Marie's mother, who had her flat there. In the summer of 1823 the annual summer trip to Erdmannsdorf had to be cancelled due to unexpected expenditure. Clausewitz had in addition become interested in architecture and took lectures in architectural drawing.<sup>825</sup>

Clausewitz took on the men of 1806 in a combative analysis of Prussia's fall of 1806, first seemingly entitled '*Der Krieg von 1806*'.<sup>826</sup> The text was not published until 1888 by the *Großen Generalstabe* due to the straightforward criticism of leading persons, then entitled '*Nachrichten über Preußen in seiner großen Katastrophe*'.<sup>827</sup> The unknown military editor interpreted the time of writing to 1823-1824, with some

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<sup>821</sup> Clausewitz [1822-23?], 'Sobiesky', *Werke*, Vol 10/10, 3-14. Clausewitz referred to Condé's observations of Sobiesky in the text, which might indicate an even earlier date of writing; closer to the studies of the wars of Louis XIV. The date of 1829 interpreted in other accounts seems altogether even more unlikely.

<sup>822</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 7 December 1822, *Schriften* (1990), 418-21, cf. 419

<sup>823</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmannsdorf 15 July 1823, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 487-89; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 21 July 1823, *Schriften* (1990), 426-27; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 26 July 1823, *Schriften* (1990), 427-30

<sup>824</sup> On the movement see Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmannsdorf 2 September 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 499 n1, n9; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 7 September 1826; Berlin 21 September 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 499-505

<sup>825</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 26 July 1823, *Schriften* (1990), 427-30

<sup>826</sup> Compare Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 1196

<sup>827</sup> Clausewitz [1822-24], '*Nachrichten über Preußen in seiner großen Katastrophe*', *Schriften* (1979), 301-492. Hahlweg stated here 1823-24 as time of writing, while 1824-25 was stated in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 330

revisions made in 1828, and this has become generally accepted.<sup>828</sup> The general staff used the text in 1888 to promote military interests and preparations for war by pointing to 1806 as the epitome of decline, something that should never happen again.

It seems likely the piece was written in 1823 or even earlier due to the agitating tone.<sup>829</sup> The combative tone in the title has been lost in English translation by using the word 'Observations'.<sup>830</sup> The German word '*Nachricht*' had at least a double meaning. First, as noun it meant truthful news or disclosures about a distant event in the past.<sup>831</sup> Second, as verb it was derived from '*Richten*', thus aiming and directing. '*Nachrichten*' had also the meanings of re-aiming according to a previous aim point and re-directing a battue at a shoot; in that sense bringing back hunters and hounds to order behind a new scent; or to employ the leader hound in a search for wounded animals.<sup>832</sup> I have not been able to confirm whether the title was Clausewitz's idea, or if it was titled so by the 1888 editor. Anyway '*Disclosures about Prussia in her Great Catastrophe*' seems to be a more appropriate translation.

Gneisenau informed Clausewitz of some new work on ballistics by their liberal acquaintance Benzenberg, professor of physics, in early 1824. Clausewitz wrote a short response outlining some reflections on the firing of artillery. He had however no time just then to do a proper study of artillery due to other preoccupations, one of which may have been his history of the 1812 campaign in Russia. He told Gneisenau that his knowledge of 'the ballistic problem' was poor, as was also his knowledge of higher mathematics.

Scharnhorst was never an expert on ballistics and mathematics but he had taught the basics. He had been more interested in the employment of artillery. Clausewitz thought that Scharnhorst would have liked Benzenberg due to his spirit of enquiry. He had profound knowledge of his subject so he could move intellectually and conduct enquiries freely, not trapped in dominating preconceptions.<sup>833</sup> This was probably how Clausewitz looked upon himself, too. He had realized the growth during the Enlightenment of the paradigm that had alienated the warlike element intrinsic to war from military thought, with disaster as a later consequence.

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<sup>828</sup> v. Clausewitz, '*Nachrichten über Preußen in seiner großen Katastrophe*', Hg. Großen Generalstabe – Abteilung für Kriegsgeschichte, *kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften*, Heft 10 (Berlin: Mittler, 1888), 417-548, cf. 418

<sup>829</sup> Clausewitz was in addition busy with analysing the Campaign 1812 in Russia during 1824 and early 1825, which also speak for 1823 or earlier.

<sup>830</sup> See '*Observations on Prussia in her Great Catastrophe*' in for example Paret, Clausewitz and the State, 330, 343

<sup>831</sup> Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 3 (Leipzig: 1798), 383 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000331384> accessed on 24 November 2011

<sup>832</sup> Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol 3 (Leipzig: 1798), 383 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000331392> accessed on 24 November 2011

<sup>833</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 15 March 1824, the text '*Über das Schiessen der Artillerie*' amended, *Schriften* (1990), 438, 439-44



Gneisenau was told in April 1824 of a new book on infantry by Georges de Chambray (1783-1848). The book contained no new military ideas, but was written in the same spirit as Clausewitz's recent history of Napoleon's campaign in Russia in 1812.<sup>834</sup> Chambray was ironically labelled a 'keen unbiased observer', who favoured British infantry tactics and had no understanding of the Prussian approach to combat. Clausewitz criticized Chambray for lacking both purpose and result in his investigation. As a reflection he outlined six questions on tactics and firepower.<sup>835</sup>

The Russian campaign was treated by Clausewitz in four different texts presumably written between 1823 and March 1825. The editors of *Werke* constructed a history of the campaign of 1812 using these different texts.<sup>836</sup> This was also pointed out by Marie in her preface of December 1834.<sup>837</sup> The inconsistency of the texts became even clearer when the more complete original manuscript was published in 1990. This had, as noted by Hahlweg, many corrections by Clausewitz and some differences vis-à-vis the version published in the seventh volume of *Werke* published in 1835.<sup>838</sup>

The last text '*Uebersicht des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland*' was written after Clausewitz had read Chambray's work, seemingly in 1824.<sup>839</sup> This text, printed as chapter two, was sent to Gneisenau, who also had seen an earlier draft, in late March 1825.<sup>840</sup> Clausewitz had in addition used a new Russian work by one Colonel Boutourlin and a Russian *Generalkarte* borrowed from Gneisenau.<sup>841</sup> Marie noted that the text '*Zu den Memoiren. Der Russische Feldzug 1812*', printed as chapter one in *Werke*, was written earlier along with the text '*Verlauf des Feldzuges*', printed as chapter three.<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> M..[Georges de Chambray], *Geschichte des Feldzugs gegen Russland im Jahr 1812*, Freilich aus dem Französischen und mit Amerkungen versehen von F.B. Kausler, 2 Vols (Stuttgart: Franck, 1824). First published as *Histoire de l'expédition de Russie* in Paris 1823. A short review of the translated book was published in *Militair-Wochenblatt*, Jg. 9. (Berlin: Mittler, 10 July 1824), 3045

<sup>835</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 11 April 1824, *Schriften* (1990), 444-46.

<sup>836</sup> Clausewitz, 'Der Feldzug von 1812 in Rußland', *Werke* Vol 7/10, 1-248. The chapters were here titled as a coherent historical account: '1. Ankunft in Wilna. Feldzugplan. Lager vor Drissa'; '2. Übersichtliche Zusammenstellung der Begebenheiten des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland'; '3. Weiterer Verlauf des Feldzuges'

<sup>837</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz, 'Vorrede' 17 December 1834, *Werke* 7/10, V-X

<sup>838</sup> Clausewitz, 'Der Feldzug von 1812 in Rußland', *Schriften* (1990), 729-935. See also Halweg, 'Vorbemerkung', 717-28. The chapters were in this manuscript titled: 'Zu den Memoiren. Der Russische Feldzug 1812'; '2tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzuge' (not present in *Werke*); 'Uebersicht des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland'; '3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs'. I refer according to this version if nothing else is stated.

<sup>839</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-March 1825], 'Uebersicht des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland', *Schriften* (1990), 763-806

<sup>840</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 30 March 1825; 3 April 1825, *Schriften* (1990), 470-71

<sup>841</sup> [Dimitrii] Boutourlin, *Histoire Militaire de la Campagne de Russie en 1812* (Paris & Petersburg: Pochard - Florent, 1824). An extensive review of this book was pulished in *Militair-Wochenblatt*, Jg. 9. (Berlin: Mittler, 26 June – 10 July 1824), 3038; 3041; 3043-44

<sup>842</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz, 'Vorrede' 17 December 1834, *Werke* 7/10, V-X

It seems likely that Clausewitz wrote the first text after completing the study of the war 1806, apparently in 1823 or early 1824.<sup>843</sup> This text was another subtle criticism of the men of 1806 and a political justification of deeds done for Prussia by individuals like Clausewitz in 1812. The text started by criticising 'scholarly strategy' and those who had believed in the 'genius of Phull'.<sup>844</sup> Clausewitz described the General as a man of reason and *Bildung*, but with a total lack of material knowledge. That was the practice of real generalship. He was characterized as lost in books about Caesar and Frederick the Great.<sup>845</sup> The text mixed personal experience with a more general overview of the campaign.

The text on the course of events entitled '*3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*' and the short, probably removed, older preface to this text entitled '*2tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*' was most likely written between the spring and winter of 1824.<sup>846</sup> The text referred to Boutourlin's work, and this implies a time of writing no earlier than the spring of 1824, but before March 1825.<sup>847</sup> The text ends with a detailed exposition of the Convention of Tauroggen, in which Clausewitz himself had been involved. Anton von Seydlitz, York's adjutant, had in 1823 published the war diary of the Prussian auxiliary corps, which might have inspired Clausewitz.<sup>848</sup>

Clausewitz was in the final text interested in the character and genius of commanding generals related to the course of events.<sup>849</sup> One example was of course York's decision at Tauroggen that had a tremendous strategic impact on the continuation, both political and military. Clausewitz's analysis is instructive regarding his understanding of cause and effect in a strategic sense; basically that war could be reduced to a series of actions with a few events more decisive than others, which underlay the later coining of the notion of *Schwerpunkt*. However, this was applicable in great warlike war: he

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<sup>843</sup> Kessel suggested that Clausewitz probably wrote the first part in 1814, which seems way too early and not likely if one ponders Clausewitz's position in the Legion, worried about his future, on his way into depression. Cf. Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf. 419 n.46. This date was followed by Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 330

<sup>844</sup> Clausewitz [1823 – early 1824], 'Zu den Memorien. Der Russische Feldzug 1812', *Schriften* (1990), 729-62

<sup>845</sup> Phull had acted as tutor to the Tsar from 1807 and was his military advisor in the first phase of the campaign 1812. He had to resign later in the autumn of 1812, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>846</sup> Hahlweg suggested that '*3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*' was written later than the overview, thus after March 1825; see *Schriften* (1990), 726. This seems unlikely; instead the spring to December 1824 is more likely.

<sup>847</sup> Clausewitz [spring 1824 to March 1825], '*3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*', *Schriften* (1990), 807-919, cf. 836, 866, 866 n.52

<sup>848</sup> Generalmajor Seydlitz, *Tagebuch des Königlich Preussischen Armeekorps unter Befehl des General-Lieutenantes von York*, 2 Vols. (Berlin: Mittler, 1823)

<sup>849</sup> See for example the matrix on leading Russian generals amended to '*3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*'; Clausewitz [spring to March 1825], 'Charakteristik mehrerer Russische Generale', *Schriften* (1990), 928-35. The matrix was part of Gneisenau's *Nachlaß* according to Hahlweg's note, which further strengthens my interpretation that it was the draft to which Clausewitz referred to Gneisenau on 30 March 1825.

would change his mind slightly regarding war less hostile; thereof his later suggestion to think strategy as war is a continuation of *Politik*.

Even if we are not directly inclined to observe the appearances of this world as consequences of individual causes but to consider them always as joint effects of multiple forces, so the outcome of an individual link can never create a complete change in success, instead only a part change corresponding to its importance. We must however admit that the great often arises from the apparently small, and that the individual may well chance to strengthen the pure uncovered cause and often induces general effects. So is it also with York's convention. It is not reasonable to think that Bonaparte would still have been on the French throne and the arbiter of Europe without the decision General York took in Tauroggen in the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>, because this great effect was the consequence of an indefinite set of causes or even more powers, which would have been effective even without General York; but it is not wrong to say that this general's decision had enormous implications and probably speeded up the general result greatly.<sup>850</sup>

The last text also investigated the impact of casualties on the French '*Zentrum*' to explain the outcome more analytically.<sup>851</sup> Clausewitz's writings on the 1812 campaign had commenced as a memorial text and a subtle criticism of the old way of military thinking, personified by for example Phull. It ended with a casualty calculus to better understand strategic outcome. The political message was that the campaign in Russia in 1812 had cleared the way for Prussia's political and military rebirth, obviously with a bearing on the conditions after 1819. It was also clear to Clausewitz that the attack, the march to Moscow, had destroyed the *Grande Armée*, not the retreat. This insight he was to elaborate further to grasp the reciprocity of attack and defence within the following two years.

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<sup>850</sup> Clausewitz [spring 1824 to winter 1825], Chapter 3 'Verlauf des Feldzugs' of 'Feldzug von 1812 in Russland', *Schriften* (1990), 914. 'Ob wir gleich nicht geneigt sind die Erscheinungen in dieser Welt als folgen einzelner Ursachen zu betrachten sondern sie immer nur als die Gesamtwirkung vieler Kräfte ansehen, so daß das Ausfallen eines einzelnen Glieds niemals eine totale Veränderung in dem Erfolge sondern nur eine seiner Wichtigkeit entsprechende Theilveränderung hervorbringen kann, so müssen wir doch einräumen, daß oft Großes aus scheinbar Kleinem entsprungen ist, und daß eine einzelne also dem Zufall stärker bloß gestellte Ursache oft sehr allgemeine Wirkungen hervorbringt. So ist es auch mit der Yorkschen Konvention. Es ist nicht vernünftig zu glauben daß ohne diesen Entschluß welchen General York am 29<sup>ten</sup> Abends in *Tauroggen* faßte, *Bonaparte* noch auf dem fr[anzösischen] Thron und die Franzosen noch die Gebiether Europa's wären, denn diese großen Wirkungen sind die Folgen einer unendlichen Menge von Ursachen oder vielmehr Kräften, die größentheils auch ohne den General York wirksam geblieben wären; aber zu leugnen ist es nicht, daß der Entschluß dieses Generals ungeheure Folgen gehabt und wahrscheinlich das allgemeine Resultat sehr beschleunigt hat.'

<sup>851</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-March 1825], 'Russ Feldz v. 1812. Beilage N.2. Uebersicht der Verluste welche das französische *Centrum* beim Vorgehen und auf dem Rückzug erlitten hat', *Schriften* (1990), 920-24 + matrix

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The chapter has explained the political turmoil present in the German states after the War of Liberation. It has pointed out that the attack by the conservative wing on the reformers and institutions created during the reform gained momentum in 1819. This conflict clearly motivated Clausewitz to write. It also influenced his arguments. Clausewitz was considered too liberal, which probably spoiled his career as a diplomat and further promotion. The chapter pointed out his criticism of 'the men of 1806' and his defence of the reform.

Seemingly, the studies of the war in 1806 and the campaign of 1812 had several motives, from political and ideological to historical and military-theoretical. These accounts projected the negative of the old order along with the positive aspects of the reform, which had made the rebirth of Prussia possible. The chapter explained briefly also the study of Fredrich's strategy, which pointed out General Lloyd's accounts on the Seven Years' War as a source and pattern for the poverty of predominant military theory. Finally, it was pointed out that the study of the campaign of 1812 included important theoretical observations that underpinned the subsequent forming of *Vom Kriege*.



## 9. TRANSMIGRATION TO VOM KRIEGE

### THE CODIFICATION OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT

It is perhaps not impossible to write a systematic theory of war full of spirit and content: up to now ours have been far from that. To say nothing of their unscientific spirit, they bubble over with the striving for coherence and completeness in a system that includes commonplaces, truisms and nonsense of all kinds.<sup>852</sup>

This chapter analyses the first sets of theoretical texts; some most likely part of the Small Volume that transmigrated into the larger analytical framework that finally became *Vom Kriege*. The chapter suggests 1823-1824 as a likely time for this transmigration. It also constitutes a very important component of the present work. The chapter considers first Clausewitz's new standpoint on the theory of war, rooted in the historical analysis that distilled conventional war and natural war. It further points to his analysis of the theory of art and architecture to develop a theory of strategy. Secondly, the first *Grundvorstellung* of the warlike element is explained, which most likely was the text referred to in the 'undated note'. This text served as the basic concept to set a proper intellectual tone for the rest of the work. It was revised as described in chapter one during the autumn of 1827, but remains an important source for understanding Clausewitz's intellectual development. Thirdly, the warlike element as the *Geist* of modern strategy is addressed. These texts printed as book 3 reflect the transmigration mentioned in the chapter title. Some texts were obviously written with the Small Volume in mind, and some indicate a close relation to his study of Friedrich's strategy.

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<sup>852</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], 'Vorrede des Verfassers', *Vom Kriege*, 184-86, cf. 184-85. 'Es ist vielleicht nicht unmöglich, eine systematische Theorie des Krieges voll Geist und Gehalt zu schreiben, unsere bisherigen aber sind weit davon entfernt. Ihres unwissenschaftlichen Geistes gar nicht zu gedenken, strotzen sie in dem Bestreben nach dem Zusammenhang und der Vollständigkeit des Systems von Alltäglichkeiten, Gemeinprüchen und Salbadereien aller Art'

## A NEW STANDPOINT ON THE THEORY OF WAR

Clausewitz stated in an undated preface that a systematic theory of war was perhaps not impossible to conceptualize, as the quote above indicates. Further, it stated that the chapters were only loosely knitted but not without inner coherence for the intelligent reader, which clearly suggests that it reflected the work of the Small Volume. Older theory was refuted and ridiculed because its aspiration for completeness made it trivial. The form, the way of thinking, to propound general right, made that kind of theory untrue for military practice. Clausewitz cited an old, absurd fire regulation as an ironical illustration of the poverty of old military thought that tried to regulate everything. Howard & Paret set the time for this preface at 1816-1818, which however might be too narrow.<sup>853</sup> The preface expressed a more complete state of work than the previously-cited, undated postscript projected, so a time of writing up to 1823 is possible.

At some point Clausewitz made up his mind that a new theory of war for thinking strategy better was possible. This indicated a change from mere pragmatism of the individual use of combat to a more stringent framework based on the warlike element. It seems very likely that Clausewitz continued to think, write and revise the Small Volume in Berlin. Ultimately, he decided to reorganise and revise his texts to expand the scope. The Small Volume transmigrated into a larger framework that became *Vom Kriege*, apparently around 1823-1824, along with the criticism of the men of 1806.

Several texts written with the Small Volume in mind and fused into the larger work still exist, both in *Vom Kriege* and in the collection of earlier texts published in 1990.<sup>854</sup> These texts, about 45 printed pages, provide valuable insights into the way Clausewitz raised the analytical abstraction to develop the warlike element in order to theorize the conduct of war. The texts were published as organised for Books 1 and 2. The present work interprets all the texts in the framework of the larger work, since the initial Small Volume cannot be reconstructed sufficiently. The present work suggests a time span between November 1816 and 1824 for these first sets of texts.

A text organised as chapter two for the first version of Book 2 elaborated a new standpoint on the theory of war, which fairly well explains the fundamentals of his arguments derived from the dichotomy of conventional war and natural war he distilled. To make a theory on the conduct of war possible one had to understand, first, what war was; secondly, what war should do; thirdly, what war could be. Bonaparte's wars of disintegration (*Zertrümmerungskriege*) had shown what war could be. It was impossible to think of war within narrow horizons any more (*engere Gesichtskreisen*). It was consequently the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that had narrowed the horizons and given rise to unclear ideas, leading to false theories. No one had asked about the origins of these false ideas, which Clausewitz obviously

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<sup>853</sup> Clausewitz, Author's preface to an Unpublished Manuscript on the Theory of War Written between 1816 and 1818', *On War*, 61-62

<sup>854</sup> Clausewitz, 'Ites Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges'; 'II tes Kapitel. Mittel des Krieges'; 'III tes Kapitel. Friktion im Kriege.'; '4tes Kapitel. Von der Gefahr im Kriege.'; '5tes Kapitel. Von der körperlichen Anstrengungen im Kriege'; '6tes Kapitel. Nachrichten im Kriege.' *Schriften* (1990), 630-46

thought he was now doing. Officers had up to his time been happy to learn from the experience of acquaintances, with the implication that:

War and theory push themselves drifting about in conventional bounds with a kind of imaginary security; war limited by counterweight, which people thought war could not overcome, turning around the theory of limits that they found unnecessary to over-step. Such a theory must then have fallen into a very non-theoretical state of astonishment over what nineteenth-century practice was doing all-unexpectedly.<sup>855</sup>

One problem in Clausewitz's opinion was that strategy could not theoretically be posited on moral conventions, because it neglected the deeply human primordial warlike element. The Napoleonic Wars had exposed what war could do, and this had to be adopted as an epitome so as to be prepared for the worst. The point was however not that every strategy had to pursue this line; more that everyone was now aware of war tending to the utmost. The limitations inherited from ages of tradition had been destroyed and so had the moral ideas of counterweights for intellectual, civilized, lawful limitations.

Up to a certain time Clausewitz had had a purely pragmatic view of strategy similar to Scharnhorst's. But when he realized, or constructed, the dichotomy between conventional war and natural war he thought it might be possible to say something theoretically intelligent about the thinking of strategy. His new standpoint on the theory of war sought to destroy the inherited ontology of war for strategic thought, not so dissimilar from Heidegger's ambition in *Sein und Zeit*. From my point of view it is therefore misleading to interpret Clausewitz's deeds as a lifelong ambition to construct a general theory of war.

The new standpoint induced a set of questions, which clearly illustrated his considerations in theorizing strategy: 'Has one war the same nature as another? Does the aim of the warlike enterprise differ from the political equivalent? What is the extent of forces that must be called up in war? What is the extent of energy that must be applied in the conduct of war? From where appear the many pauses in the warlike act, are they important parts of the same or true anomalies? Are the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with restricted power or the disintegration wars of the nineteenth equally appropriate?'<sup>856</sup> The essay on progression and stagnation in

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<sup>855</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '2tes Kapitel Neuer Standpunkt der Theorie des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 654-55, cf. 655. Krieg und Theorie treiben sich in *conventionellen* Schranken mit einer Art eingebildeter Sicherheit umher, der Krieg durch Gegengewicht beschränkt, die er nicht überwinden zu können glaubte, die Theorie an Grenzen umwendend die sie zu überschreiten nicht nöthig hielt. Eine solche Theorie mußte dann selbst in ein höchst untheoretisches Erstaunen gerathen über das was die Praxis im 19ten Jahrhundert unvermuthet that.'

<sup>856</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '2tes Kapitel Neuer Standpunkt der Theorie des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 654-55, cf. 654. Ist ein Krieg derselben Natur wie der andere? 'Unterscheidet sich das Ziel der kriegesischen Unternehmung von dem politischen Zwecke desselben? Welches ist das Maaß der Kräfte die im Kriege aufgeboden werden müssen? Welches ist das Maaß der Energie



the great warlike events from early 1817 obviously corresponded, at least partly, to these questions, which might indicate a connection in time, a time when the distilled dichotomy was fresh to Clausewitz.

Clausewitz preferred to interpret the concept of war in Kantian style as one thing, which the first *Grundvorstellung* of war made clear. This will be developed below. Clausewitz's way of reasoning had two major interacting sides. First, conceptual analysis to develop a logical construction of the warlike element, which was to develop the matter from itself as stated in the Preface. This side was nested in the *Urbestimmungen* of war previously described. Secondly, there was a material analysis to investigate epitomes of strategic experience as performed by the Great Captains. These two sides interacted in Clausewitz's train of thought and so in presentation. In that sense Clausewitz 'sophisticated' Scharnhorst's pragmatism theoretically. Clausewitz explained in the Preface to the Small Volume his way of thinking scientifically about strategy; compare also the exposition of Lloyd's way of thinking in the analysis of Friedrich's strategy:

The scientific form lies in the endeavour to investigate the essence of the warlike appearances, to show their relation to the nature of the things [cf. the warlike element and the *Urbestimmung*] from which they are put together. Nowhere has the philosophical consequence deviated, but where it flows out in a thread that is all-too thin, the author has preferred to tear it off and to link anew to the corresponding appearance of experience; for as many plants only grow fruit if the stalk is not too high, so must also the theoretical leaves and flowers not be pushed too high, instead kept close to experience, their peculiar ground [cf. context and cases of war as individual]. It would undoubtedly be wrong to investigate the *Gestalt* of an ear of wheat from the chemical components of its seeds, when one only has to go out in the field to look at the fully-grown ears. Investigation and observation, philosophy and experience must never despise or exclude each other; they perform in a mutual community. In that sense the propositions of this book support themselves on the vault of their inner necessity, either on experience or on the concept of war itself [cf. warlike element] as an outer point and therefore manage without the opposing position.<sup>857</sup>

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die in der Kriegführung angewendet werden muß? Woher entstehen die vielen Pausen im kriegesischen Akt, sind sie wesentliche Theile desselben oder wahre *Anomalien*? Sind die Kriege des 17ten und 18ten Jahrhunderts mit verhaltener Kraft, oder die Zertrümmerungskriege des 19ten Jahrhunderts der Sache angemessener?

<sup>857</sup> Clausewitz [1817-18], 'Vorrede des Verfassers', *Vom Kriege*, 184-86, cf. 185. 'Die wissenschaftliche Form liegt in dem Bestreben, das Wesen der kriegesischen Erscheinungen zu erforschen, ihre Verbindung mit der Natur der Dinge, aus denen sie zusammengesetzt sind, zu zeigen. Nirgends ist der philosophischen Konsequenz ausgewichen, wo sie aber in einem gar zu dünnen Faden ausläuft, hat der Verfasser es vorgezogen, ihn abzureißen und an dieentsprechenden Erscheinungen der Erfahrung wieder anzuknüpfen; denn so wie manche Pflanzen nur Früchte tragen, wenn sie nicht zu hoch in den Stengel schießen, so müssen in praktischen Künsten die theoretischen Blätter und Blumen nicht zu hoch getrieben, sondern der Erfahrung, ihrem eigentümlichen Boden, nahegehalten werden. Unstreitig wäre es ein Fehler, aus den chemischen Bestandteilen des Weizenkorns die Gestalt der Ähre erforschen zu wollen,

It seems likely that the Small Volume on strategy commenced in Koblenz transmigrated finally into the framework of *Vom Kriege* in 1823-1824. This took place in writing and organising a set of texts on the theory of conducting war as the embryo for Book 2. This was continued in the subsequent Book 3 on strategy in general and in book 1, which outlined a *Grundvorstellung*, highlighting ideas with a pictorial element to set the proper intellectual tone for the rest. Several small signs indicate that this was the time when Clausewitz finally decided to write a larger piece on the theory of conducting war and thinking strategy properly. In short these signs were that:

- a. Clausewitz was really annoyed by 'the men of 1806' arising again, which was reflected in the set of more political texts 1819-1823. His critical stance in this respect culminated in the study of the War of 1806, seemingly in 1823. This text was largely a criticism of the old way thinking, arising again by uncovering the events culminating in disaster.
- b. Clausewitz was also annoyed that Valentini and other prophets of the scholarly strategy continued to write in the same old way. Valentini's theoretical work was published in the period 1820-1822, the same period as Clausewitz's study of Friedrich's strategy, which was a blistering criticism of incorrect military scientification and faulty interpretation.
- c. Jomini, too, continued to profit from the system he had propounded during the 1800s. He was publishing the extensive historical critique of the Revolutionary Wars in 13 volumes, between 1820 and 1824.<sup>858</sup>
- d. Bonaparte's memoirs published in 1823-1825, as well as other new sources, gave a greater availability of new information to write about the material side.<sup>859</sup>
- e. Clausewitz abandoned the ambition to get a diplomatic mission once and for all in 1823.
- f. The first attempt at Book 2 clearly connects, in views and references given, to the study of Friedrich's strategy.

The embryo Book 2 encompassed 12 texts apparently written over some time and first published in 1990.<sup>860</sup> Clausewitz revised the set between 1826 and 1829, but many

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die es treibt, da man nur aufs Feld zu gehen braucht, um die Ähren fertig zu sehen. Untersuchung und Beobachtung, Philosophie und Erfahrung dürfen nie einander verachten noch ausschließen; sie leisten einander gegenseitige Bürgschaft. Die Sätze dieses Buches stützen sich daher mit dem kurzen Gewölbe ihrer inneren Notwendigkeit entweder auf die Erfahrung oder auf den Begriff des Krieges selbst als einen äußeren Punkt und entbehren also der Widerlagen nicht.

<sup>858</sup> Jomini, *Historie critique et militaire des guerres de la révolution. Nouvelle édition rédigée sur de nouveaux documents et augmentée d'un grand nombre de cartes et plans*. 13 vols (Paris: Pochard, 1820-24),

<sup>859</sup> *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte Frankreichs unter Napoleon; von ihm zu St. Helena den Generalen dictirt, die seine Gefangenschaft getheilt haben, und herausgegeben nach der von ihm eigenhändig verbesserten Handschrift: Memoiren. Anmerkungen und vermischte Aufsätze, Niedergeschrieben von dem General Montholon*, 6 Vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1823-25)

basic ideas remained the same. The first texts continued the combative tone against speculative and conventional military theory. The aim appeared to be to destroy the foundations of this type of thinking and to suggest a new standpoint on the theory of conducting war. The present work gives 1823-1824 for the indications above due to the way Clausewitz elaborated the theory of war as a '*Bauwerk*', i.e. structure.<sup>861</sup> Single texts might have been written earlier as loose pieces with the Small Volume in mind and some perhaps little later. We know that Clausewitz took lessons in architectural drawing in 1823. His *Nachlaß* included a set of texts on art, the beautiful and architecture.<sup>862</sup>

Schering could not determine when Clausewitz wrote these texts. Hahlweg interpreted the time to 1809-1812, but he, followed by others, most certainly overestimated Clausewitz's theoretical ambition at that time.<sup>863</sup> The texts on the *Kriegskunst* from that time had no references to architecture as did these later pieces. The young Clausewitz had at this time not developed that sense of theory and was fully committed to practically developing the army to fight Napoleon and French preponderance. The present work suggests instead a connection to his later development of the concept of theory in a military sense, which most likely started in the phase of transition from the Small Volume to the larger framework of *Vom Kriege*. It might be that Clausewitz simply became inspired by his architecture class and thought freely on the prospect of military theory. This was at a time when he was fuelled by objections to the old way of thinking-in-writing about Prussia's 1806 catastrophe.

Examining briefly the first texts on art and architecture we can observe the similarities in language and topics. The text '*Architectural Rhapsodies*' investigated beauty in four aspects. Beautiful form was more difficult to reasonably recognize than beautiful tones and colours. The abstractions of experience indicated only a scale, which did not explain much. 'One had to say, that the element of beauty is given in the pure view (*Anschauung*) and the master builder, if he wants to catch this, can only do so if he send for the idea in his soul.'<sup>864</sup> The second paragraph caught more or less what

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<sup>860</sup> Clausewitz, 'II Buch. Ueber die Theorie des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 648-75

<sup>861</sup> See for example the opening chapter: Clausewitz [1823-24], '1tes Kapitel Des gesunden Menschenverstand im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 648-54

<sup>862</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Architektonische Rhapsodien'; 'Charakter der Privathäuser', published as Clausewitz, 'Ein Kunsttheoretisches Fragment', *Schriften* (1979), 147-56. Also published as 'Ein Kunsttheoretisches Fragment', Mitgeteilt von Hans Rothfels, *Deutsche Rundschau*, Bd. CLXXIII (October-November-December 1917), 373-82; Clausewitz, *Geist und Tat*, 170-78.

<sup>863</sup> Schering could not determine the date of writing, See Clausewitz, *Geist und Tat*, 151. Hahlweg interpreted the date of writing to probably 1809-1812, see: Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1979), 147. Uwe Hartmann has continued from Hahlweg and explicated 1808-1812 as an intensive theoretical period regarding method and recognition, which to my mind leads slightly astray from Clausewitz's train of thought. Compare Uwe Hartmann, *Carl von Clausewitz: Erkenntnis-Bildung-Generalstabsausbildung* (München: OZLOG, 1998), 42

<sup>864</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Architektonische Rhapsodien', *Schriften* (1979), 149-51, cf. 149. 'Man muß also sagen, daß das Element des Schönen in der bloßen Anschauung gegeben ist und daß

seems to have been Clausewitz's faint idea of a disposition to write *Vom Kriege* at this time:

From the connection of the elements emanates the composite. Here the idea for the first time becomes effective as clear awareness. The master builder puts the simple forms together according to purpose and meaning and according to every other thought he wants to draw into his work. Through this composition begins the empire of reason and with it the realm of laws for thought. Here an objective judgement will be possible and in this relationship one can say what is right and what is objectionable. Here commences the realm of a rule of thought derived from a concept.<sup>865</sup>

This explained in a nutshell Clausewitz's basic approach to evaluating strategy by a simple comparison of purpose and means, which will soon be developed below. In Clausewitz's opinion the simple forms (cf. attack – defence) and the element of beauty (cf. warlike element) were forgotten as soon as they were combined in the first composition (*Zusammensetzung*). People seemed to believe the conception left the work and was beyond comprehension (cf. genius). This was a mistake since the element of beauty was reused all the time in other compositions.

The composition (cf. campaign and war) was a continual test bed. Thus pure conception decided the beautiful relation between the height and the width of windows in a house. The inclination to judge compositions according to fixed rules recognized by reason (cf. scholarly strategy) was consequently not good enough, since beauty of conception was indefinite. Note that harmony was a quality frequently used in *Naturphilosophie*.

Clausewitz argued that a pure form of beauty associated with a certain meaning over a long time could be rationalized too far and turned into a dark prejudice of aesthetic suggestion, instinctively appealing to junior observers. This implied that certain campaigns and battles had been adopted as models of *Kriegskunst* beyond truth. It seems that Clausewitz had the scientification of Friedrich's strategic compositions in mind, which had caused the underlying warlike element to be forgotten. His wars and operations had become so familiar that they had become prejudices, so the actual underlying strategy had been overlooked.

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der Baumeister, wenn er es erhaschen will, dies nur kann, wenn er sich die Anschauung in die Seele ruft.'

<sup>865</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Architektonische Rhapsodien', *Schriften* (1979), 149-51, cf. 149. 'Aus der Verbindung der Elemente geht das Zusammengesetzte hervor. Hier wird der Gedanke, deutliches Bewußtsein, zuerst wirksam. Nach der Zweck und Beduetung und nach jedem anderen Gedanken, den es dem Baumeister beliebt in sein Werk hineinzutragen, setzt er die einfachen Formen zusammen. Mit dieser zusammensetzung also fängt das Reich des Verstandes und mit ihm das Reich des Gesetztes an. Hier wird also ein objektives Urteil möglich und in diesen Beziehungen läßt sich sagen, was recht und was verwerflich sei. Hier fängt also das Reich einer auf Begriffe begründeten Regel an.'

Book 3 on strategy in general was presented to propound the effective element of war, hence clarify the warlike element, which seems to correspond to the element of beauty in architecture. Book 4 elaborated combat, *Gefecht*, from the outline of the warlike element presented in Book 3. For Clausewitz the concept of combat was transferable into the concepts of battle, campaign and war. Consequently, the concept of combat corresponded to composition in architecture.<sup>866</sup>

Book 5 elaborated external aspects related to the composition of combat. Defence and attack were defined in *Vom Kriege* as the 'forms of war', which seemed corresponded to the simple forms in architecture. To continue this analogy, the intention of Book 8 on the war plan was to elaborate conceptions behind compositions. This was a purposeful use of the simple forms of war and the application of the warlike element in different situations. Note that Clausewitz reworked the scope of theory later when, in 1826-1827, he ran into problem with defence and attack. I will return to this; but now to the first attempt to define the notion of theory *per se*, i.e. the epistemology of military thought on the conduct of war.

The first chapter on the theory of war elaborated common sense in war, which had also been addressed in the piece on Friedrich's strategy. Clausewitz defined the concept of common sense as: 'We understand by this [common sense] every consideration which finds truth in the simple comparison of purpose (*Zweck*) and means (*Mittel*), without using a scientific apparatus of compound methods and constructions.'<sup>867</sup> This statement encapsulated Clausewitz's main approach to analysing experience. This was to investigate how commanders had strategically tailored purpose and means according to circumstances. It can be compared to the metaphor of the duel in the *Grundvorstellung* depicting the contest of commanders, into which it was the scope of theory to enquire. It can also be compared to the tenants of *Naturphilosophie*.

Clausewitz stated that a '*großes Bauwerk*', great construction, can however never be realized through pure common sense. 'A set of scientific investigations and their result, as well as several propositions of experience determined in scientific forms, are necessary for the master builder.'<sup>868</sup> Clausewitz obviously believed in the possibility for theory to contribute to the power of judgement. The conduct of war was not just a deed of genius. He objected to the scientification of first Friedrich's and later Bonaparte's campaigns, i.e. compositions, as a 'New System'. Clausewitz stated frequently that he on the contrary did not invent any new ideas: instead he just clarified old natural knowledge used by the Great Captains of all times. The scientific

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<sup>866</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Übersicht', *Vom Kriege* 4:1, 419

<sup>867</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '1tes Kapitel Der gesunde Menschenverstand im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 648-54, cf. 648. "Wir verstehen darunter dasjenige Ueberlegen, was die Wahrheit aus der einfachen Vergleichung von Zweck und Mittel findet, ohne sich eines wissenschaftliches Apparates, zusammengesetzten Methoden und Constructionen zu bedienen."

<sup>868</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '1tes Kapitel Der gesunde Menschenverstand im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 648-54, cf. 648-49. 'Eine Menge wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen und ihrer Resultate, eben so viel Erfahrungs Sätze in wissenschaftlichen Formen fixirt, sind dem Baumeister nötig.'

use of older history to support far-reaching claims was especially drawn on to illustrate theoretical charlatantry.

Our standpoint is not against all abstract truth, not against the scientific spirit, instead against the composite scientific form; our standpoint is aimed against systematics. Does theory enquire into the matters that constitute war [cf. warlike element], does it distinguish sharply what at first glance appears to run together, does it state the quality of the means completely, does it display the probable effects of these, does it clearly determine the nature of purposes [cf. *Politik*], does it bring light everywhere for prolonged critical observation in the field of war: if so, theory has accomplished its main mission. Theory then becomes a guide for everyone wishing to be familiar with war from books; then it brightens the student's path everywhere, lightens his steps, trains his judgement, protects him from going astray.<sup>869</sup>

The conduct of war was indeed very simple in theory but not easy in practice due to the many ways of using and understanding the means. The historical record proved that seemingly unknown persons could suddenly rise with little training as masters of the *Kriegskunst*, just because of their character, sharp eye and ambitions. He pointed at Tempelhoff, Bülow and Jomini, as opposing views with their very complicated systems for how to grasp strategy. In fact, often founded on one initial true idea but developed as systems, their ideas became useless. Their ambitions had made military theory more or less the opposite of practice. Their metaphors, invention of technical and artistic jargon, became an obstacle to practice; difficult to understand even for the inventor.

Clausewitz had earlier described to Gneisenau that he would exclude all foreign terms from his exposition, which further indicated his view of the matter. The speculative military discourse had produced very detailed systems one after the other. This had made military language too complex and too contradictory, which in the end hampered military power of judgement. A second objection referred to the interpretation of historical facts. Clausewitz followed Scharnhorst and argued for the power of historical evidence to support military theoretical claims. He realized

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<sup>869</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '1tes Kapitel Der gesunde menschenverstand im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 648-54, cf. 653. 'Nicht gegen alle abstrakte Wahrheit, nicht gegen den wissenschaftlichen Geist, sondern gegen die zusammengesetzte wissenschaftliche Form, gegen das Systematisiren ist unsere Meinung gerichtet. Untersucht die Theorie die Gegenstände welche den Krieg ausmachen, unterscheidet sie schärfer, was auf den ersten Blick zusammen zu fließen scheint, giebt sie die Eigenschaften der Mittel vollständig an, zeigt sie die wahrscheinlichen Wirkungen derselben, bestimmt sie klar die Natur der Zwecke; trägt sie überall das Licht einer verweilenden kritischen Betrachtung in das Feld des Krieges so hat sie den Hauptgegenstand ihrer Aufgabe erfüllt. Sie wird dann ein Führer desjenigen, der sich mit dem Kriege aus Büchern vertraut machen will; sie hellt ihm überall den Weg auf, erleichtert ihm seine Schritte, erzieht sein Urtheil, bewahrt ihn vor vielen Abwegen.'

however the ambiguity of interpreting historical facts. The same case could be interpreted to support opposite standpoints.<sup>870</sup>

I omit Clausewitz's chapter organised as number two, which suggested a new standpoint on the theory of war, since this was addressed already at the beginning of the present chapter. Clausewitz turned to the scope of theory (*Umfang der Theorie*), starting with a condemnation of Bülow's system. This system was condemned for making strategy a pure calculus of physical superiority, excluding moral forces and presuming that everyone would act like the optimal model. A theory on *Kriegskunst* could not write recipes, in Clausewitz opinion. It was neither a law book for the imposed and forbidden, nor a *Criminal Codex* to prosecute a commander afterwards. It was, instead, an illumination of the bulk of wars to display categories of means related to their purposes. In action, it was up to the individual commander to freely choose and tailor examples according to his power of judgement.<sup>871</sup>

A methodical repetitive way of proceeding was of course important in war as in life in general; in addition a key feature of peacetime training extending into war. Friedrich the Great's generals were thought of for their oblique order of battle (*schiefe Schlachtordnung*). The French revolutionary generals became known for their involvement with extended battle lines (*Schlachtlinie*), Bonaparte's marshals for attacking in a concentrated mass fulfilled by bloody energy. If the *Kriegskunst* was only a product of scientific enquiry, then it would not be subject to fashion and general change due to new inventions and new institutions. This was of course not the case, in Clausewitz's opinion. But the lack of a proper philosophy for the conduct of war had subjected successful commanders to naïve imitation. For Clausewitz the relation of war and method was, instead, a theoretical one:

Large war does not consist of an infinite sum of courses of events, which can be transmitted in their diversities and through a better or poorer method better or more poorly used; instead [it consists] of single, large, decisive [events] demanding individual treatment.<sup>872</sup>

A theory of *Kriegskunst* was thus not about finding the right method *a priori* applicable in most cases and events; instead every war had to be thought of as one individual act, which could be reduced to single more important events. Clausewitz employed the concept of polarity to make his point more clear. This concept he borrowed from physics. It was developed by Schelling and employed for example in Paul Erman's work

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<sup>870</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '1tes Kapitel Der gesunde menschenverstand im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 648-54

<sup>871</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '3tes Kapitel Umfang der Theorie', *Schriften* (1990), 655-59

<sup>872</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '4tes Kapitel Methodismus', *Schriften* (1990), 655-59, cf. 659. 'Zwar besteht der Krieg im Großen nicht aus einer unendlichen Menge kleiner Ereignisse, die in ihren Verschiedenheiten sich übertragen und die also durch eine bessere oder schlechtere Methode, besser oder schlechter benutzt würden, sondern aus einzelnen, großen, entscheidenden, die individuell behandelt sein wollen.'

on electrochemical magnetism, 1821.<sup>873</sup> Clausewitz was as already mentioned fond of Erman's work and lectures at the *Kriegsschule*. He also employed several other analogies from physics to elucidate his ideas on strategy. In this case he wanted to clarify the implication of the enemy's free will. If one understood the enemy's will merely as derived from estimation, then the enemy appeared more or less as a supporting concept for one's own plan and theory.

Clausewitz objected to the popular rule of thought: always do the opposite of the enemy's estimated intention (*Die Regel des Gegentheils*). War was to be regarded as one joint action (*zur Einheit verbundene Gesamt-Handlung*), which implied that every action under the aim of war was pure means. The polarity of single parts as combats was thus not the most interesting; instead the coherent effect of these parts towards the final aim was what mattered. In addition the commanders lacked access to a bird's-eye view of the situation; they always acted on incomplete information, according to their individual aims. A battle was a true polarity but not the strategic use of battle results in a larger perspective.<sup>874</sup> The reduction of war to one or a few more important events later underpinned the notion of *Schwerpunkt*, but this viewpoint was not fully attainable through theorizing attack and defence. This later led to the adaptation of the double ways of war.

Clausewitz's next three chapters were consequently devoted to theorizing success. He started to outline a spectrum of two opposing poles - certainty of success versus required size of success (*Sicherheit und Größe des Erfolgs*). A smaller requirement was obviously easier to attain than a larger with the same means. On the other hand a smaller success was not always sufficient for every political purpose. The certainty of success could consequently not constitute the highest law of thought. Daun's caution, for example, had brought success to Maria Theresia in the Seven Years' War.<sup>875</sup> To be bold or cautious could not be prescribed in general terms. Clausewitz described as follows how tricky it could be to understand the strategic right in war, between being a political tool and enemy counteraction:

This purpose for which success must be directed does not just mean the pure political intention underlying the war, when not every single action of the warlike act achieves this aim immediately, but the act consists of a series of events, where one calls forth another and which leads hierarchically to the final aim. We see thus a series of immediate points which can be considered as closer purposes. These points are however not conditional, because they are determined through the final aim, the purpose of the war; anyone who wants to reach this aim must run through that way. Consequently, what appears *per se* as the boldest in relation to the final aim may be the most careful; and conversely, a too-small enterprise can plunge us into extreme danger and can then be rightfully labelled boldness.<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>873</sup> Paul Erman, *Umriss zu den physischen Verhältnissen des von Herrn Professor Örsted entdeckten elektro-chemischen Magnetismus* (Berlin: Nauck, 1821)

<sup>874</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '5tes Kapitel Polarität der gegenseitigen Absichten im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 661-62

<sup>875</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '6tes Kapitel Sicherheit des Erfolgs', *Schriften* (1990), 663-64

<sup>876</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '6tes Kapitel Sicherheit des Erfolgs', *Schriften* (1990), 663-64, cf. 663. 'Mit diesem Zweck, für welchen der Erfolg eingerichtet werden muß, ist nicht bloß die



With this difficulty in mind he formulated a main law of thought (*Hauptgesetz*) for strategy on what he called the basic static relation of success and danger in war (*Das statische Grundverhältnis des Krieges*). This was an obvious relation as time and power constitute the sweeping law of thought for the static (*der Statik* cf. equilibrium), to which every action was subject. Consequently, the greater success one aimed for in relation to the available means, the greater was the danger of failure. A theoretical critique had to examine whether the intended success was necessary and justified according to the final purpose of the enterprise. Clausewitz regarded this finally as a way to judge whether the danger of no utility was too great.<sup>877</sup>

This standpoint seems to have run contrary to the mainstream view in military discourse: that the events of war should not be judged according to success. Clausewitz asked in a polemic tone: 'What is more natural than to ask for the dissolution of the whole? Is not success in a way the test of rightness (*die Rechenprobe*), thus one critical summary of the whole?'<sup>878</sup> In every case he argued, with a few exceptions due to exceptional interference of chance, that a wrong strategic estimate constituted the prime cause of a failed enterprise. Consequently to better learn 'truth' from experience one should investigate success. Critical enquiry should operate through the outcome as well as after and through success (*nach und durch den Erfolg*). Success was the yardstick to evaluate the course of events and learn strategy.

Clausewitz pointed out the condition of unequal information in the situation of command and later enquiry. The student of strategy knew the outcome, which made it easier to judge the course of action taken. The commander should however be a virtuoso. If his 'prophetic spirit' had managed to foresee the way as a result of his critical enquiry he deserved appreciation indeed. Deficiencies should consequently be related to the size of the gap between estimation and outcome. In a way this pinpointed the core of Clausewitz's theoretical outlook; individual ability to grasp the complex of what was necessary and possible, so as to tailor a military enterprise with purpose and means in balance.

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politische Absicht gemeint, die dem Kriege zum Grunde liegt, denn nicht jede einzelne Handlung des kriegerischen Akts reicht ja unmittelbar bis an dieses Ziel, sondern dieser Akt besteht aus einer Reihe von Ereignissen, deren eins das andere hervorruft und welche in einer Stufenfolge an das endliche Ziel führen. Wir sehen also, daß es eine Menge von Zwischenpunkten giebt, welche als nähere Zwecke betrachtet werden können. Diese Punkte sind aber nicht willkürlich, weil sie durch das endliche Ziel, den Zweck des Krieges, bestimmt werden; wer zum Ziel will muß den Weg durchlaufen. Dadurch wird uns also klar wie das was an und für sich als die größte Kühnheit erscheint in Beziehung, auf das endliche Ziel die höchste Vorsicht sein kann; und umgekehrt, wie ein zu kleines Unternehmen uns in die höchste Gefahr stürzen und dann mit Recht Verwegenheit genannt werden kann.'

<sup>877</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '7tes Kapitel Erfolg und Gefahr Das statische Grund Verhältnis des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 664-65

<sup>878</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '8tes Kapitel Ueber die Kritik aus dem Erfolg', *Schriften* (1990), 665-67, cf. 665. 'Was ist also natürlicher als daß wir nach der Auflösung des Ganzen fragen. Ist nicht der Erfolg gewissermaßen die Rechenprobe also eine summarische Kritik des Ganzen?'

Bonaparte was employed to illustrate the standpoint; one would probably have appreciated his boldness and steadfastness as well as admired his striking judgement if the Russians had capitulated or complied in Moscow in 1812. On the other hand had he been defeated in the mountains of Carinthia in 1796 or at Marengo in 1800 with the result a catastrophe, his boldness would never have been admired. Clausewitz reflected on the personality of a commander.

In most cases when a commander set his own personality high in the 'strategic touch' (*Anschlag*) and conducted things with great confidence according to conditions spotted by him only; then the observation of success would encounter constancy (*Standhaftigkeit*). These individual traits for action could lead to success as well as disaster. Constancy was something more than just boldness and spirit of enterprise, which could more or less be learned. A commander with this trait made action even more subjective, which underlined success as a learning yardstick for strategic studies.<sup>879</sup>

The chapter organized as number nine investigated the question of whether the conduct of war was an art or a science.<sup>880</sup> The text referred to the art of construction, which suggests a time of writing among that of the other chapters. However it also brought war and *Politik* conceptually very close together, which suggests a later date. I have interpreted this text as the starting point for the revision of theory following the problem described in the undated note followed by development of the 'defence and attack device'. So I return to this text later.

The last three chapters on the theory of war elaborated the the classification of the *Kriegskunst*, and the use of historical examples to elucidate military standpoints in the manner of Scharnhorst. They may have been written earlier as loose pieces. Clausewitz repeated in concise form his older categorisation of tactics and strategy. The theory of war excluded preparations for war, which were regarded as given by training as well as by policy. The size and equipment of fighting forces was a political question rather than a theoretical one; a theory of war taught the conduct of war with the means available, good or bad, large or small.

The *Kriegskunst* in a real sense, (the art of conducting war with the means available), can be categorized and surveyed quite sufficiently through the concepts already long employed by the majority (incorrect writers have mainly been the minority) connected to the expressions tactics and strategy, (moreover, with no relation, to the meaning of the words). Tactics is associated with teachings regarding the use of armed forces in combat: strategy with the use of individual combats in war, that is their links with the plan of campaign and war. Consequently there is no third [category].<sup>881</sup>

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<sup>879</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '8tes Kapitel Ueber die Kritik aus dem Erfolg', *Schriften* (1990), 665-67

<sup>880</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], '9tes Kapitel Kriegskunst oder Kriegs-Wissenschaft.', *Schriften* (1990), 668-70

<sup>881</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '10tes Kapitel Eintheilung der Kriegskunst', *Schriften* (1990), 670-71, cf. 670. 'Die Kriegskunst im eigentlichen Sinn, (die Kunst mit den vorhandenenen Mitteln den Krieg zu führen,) läßt sich völlig genügend eintheilen und ausmessen durch die Begriffe welche

A third category, like earlier higher tactics or later operational art, was not necessary to make military thinking clear. Note that strategy was the individual use, or exploitation, of combat, which must be seen in contrast to the making of strategy according to generic principles. Clausewitz made an analogy to explain his idea of the relation: 'Tactics is the female spinner, strategy the weaver: [the effort will be effective] only when both work together; the threads will never be spun unless the weaver indicates the point where he would like them to be spun.'<sup>882</sup>

Clausewitz regarded the actual conduct of war (*eigentliche Kriegführen*) as insufficiently treated in the literature, mostly only fragmentarily covered in memoirs, often written *incognito*. The implication, seemingly absurd, was that the best generals did not know the science of war and the apparently scholarly experts, most of them really bad, were indeed no generals. This paradox had in Clausewitz's opinion started the 'unfortunate, confusing war' between military theory and practice.<sup>883</sup> He had argued in the text on 'Scharnhorst' that the Hanoverian had been the only person in Prussia who had taught real war (*eigentlichen Krieg*) before 1806. The military elite were otherwise blinded by abstract models remote from reality.<sup>884</sup>

Clausewitz's theoretical standpoints were founded simply on fighting and battle (*Kampf und Schlacht*), thus smaller and larger combats along with their results. All other activities in war were only carriers of this effective principle, thus of the warlike element. Every use of armed force was of necessity founded on the idea of combat. Precepts and rules for tactics should be founded on the nature of armed forces, for strategy on the nature of combats and success related to circumstances. He compared the relation of tactics and strategy to the production of goods related to commerce. He believed many would find his categorisation superfluous because it had no direct influence on the institution of war. Such criticism lacked resolution however since every precise theoretical consideration needed a firm standpoint to start from and to avoid ambiguity.<sup>885</sup>

The final chapter on the use of historical examples to elucidate military standpoints necessarily brought forward Scharnhorst as an eminent user of this approach. Clausewitz referred in a note to a fourth, unpublished, volume of Scharnhorst's work on new artillery, which made splendid use of experience permeated with his good

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schon lange bei der Majorität (verkehrte Schriftsteller sind hauptsächlich die Minorität gewesen) mit den Ausdrücken Taktik und Strategie, (und zwar ohne alle Beziehung, auf die Wortbedeutung,) verbunden worden sind. Taktik ist die auf die Lehre vom Gebrauch der Streitkräfte im Gefecht: Strategie vom Gebrauch der einzelnen Gefechte im Kriege d.h. von ihrer Verbindung zum Plan des Feldzuges und Krieges. Ein drittes bleibt durchaus nicht übrig.'

<sup>882</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '10tes Kapitel Eintheilung der Kriegskunst', *Schriften* (1990), 670-71, cf. 670. 'Die Taktik ist die Spinnerin, die Strategie der Weber, nur daß beide zugleich arbeiten, der Faden nicht vorher fertig gesponnen wird, sondern der Weber den Punkt anzeigt, wohin er den Faden gesponnen haben will.'

<sup>883</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '10tes Kapitel Eintheilung der Kriegskunst', *Schriften* (1990), 670-71

<sup>884</sup> Clausewitz [March 1817], 'Leben und Charakter von Scharnhorst', *Schriften* (1979), 209, 228-30

<sup>885</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], '11tes Kapitel Fortsetzung', *Schriften* (1990), 671-73

*Geist*, thus his sharp analytics.<sup>886</sup> General-major J.G. Hoyer edited and published in 1829 a fourth volume of Scharnhorst's *Handbuch für Offiziere*, which addressed strategy. This might be the manuscript Clausewitz had in mind, even though he referred to artillery.<sup>887</sup> Clausewitz did not intend to make much use of examples in his work, which clearly indicates that the text was written with the Small Volume in mind from the beginning.

He objected to the custom older military writers had of using examples. The French Lieutenant-general Marquis de Feuquières (1590-1640) exemplified those who touched upon facts and just faintly implied something, which was completely useless for the student of strategy.<sup>888</sup> Later military writers had primarily theorized from the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and the wars emanating from the French Revolution. The reason was the similarity to modern wars and the existence of extensive historical accounts of these wars. Clausewitz observed that older wars appeared in a larger context just as '*politische Ereignisse*', neat political events, which rendered them quite unmotivated to study, obviously with present conditions in mind.

We should remember that Clausewitz at this time understood war from the epitome of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars as ripped loose from financial and conventional bounds, driven by public hatred. The text on examples thus seems to have been written at the very beginning of the process of distilling two approaches to war. He simply regarded wars driven as purely political adventures as not relevant to modern strategy. Clausewitz was more concerned with grander, national and energized wars.<sup>889</sup> As pointed out earlier he regarded future war as uncertain, but acknowledged that all now had the knowledge of warlike war. This view of present conditions simply motivated his way of theorizing.

#### THE FIRST *GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG* – THE *URBESTIMMUNG* DEPICTED AS A DUEL

The first set of seven texts that conceptualized the *Urbestimmung* of War, the warlike element, between philosophical consequence and experience would later be arranged as Book 1, but seems to have been written in the frame of the Small Volume as single chapters. Clausewitz referred to the *chapters* on defence and attack, as well as the chapter on the war plan; not to the *books* on these matters. The seventh text consisted

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<sup>886</sup> Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Handbuch der Artillerie*, 3 Vols (Hannover: Helwingschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1804-13)

<sup>887</sup> Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Handbuch für Offiziere, in den angewandten Theilen der Kriegswissenschaften. Vierter Theil, von der Strategie. Nach den Grundlinien des verstorbenen General-Lieutenant von Scharnhorst von dem Königlich Preueßischen General-Major J.G. Hoyer* (Hannover: Helwingschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1829)

<sup>888</sup> *Kriegsnachrichten des Marquis von Feuquières: Eine freie Uebersetzung der neuesten Ausgabe dieses Werks*, 2 Vols (Berlin: Unger, 1786)

<sup>889</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '12tes Kapitel Ueber Beispiele', *Schriften* (1990), 673-75

of some final remarks on the first book, which indicated that he had from this point expanded the scope to write a larger work.<sup>890</sup>

The first text referred to a then-present hostile mood of the French people towards Prussia. This atmosphere of conflict could make impending war very bloody and probably lead to a new catastrophe. This contemporary reference might indicate a time of writing prior to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, i.e. prior to the autumn of 1818, when Prussia had occupation forces in France, probably during or in the aftermath of the famine and European economic crises of 1816-1817. I have however placed the set of texts between 1817 and 1823.<sup>891</sup> The first text addressed *Zweck und Wesens des Krieges*, the purpose and essence, or temper, of war, later reworked and replaced by the seminal first chapter of Book 1.<sup>892</sup>

We will not first work up any ponderous journalistic definition of war, instead we stick to the element itself [cf. warlike element] in the *Zweikampf. Der Krieg* [the concept of war] is nothing but an *erweiterter Zweikampf* [enlarged/enhanced duel/bout]. However, if we choose to view the numerous dualists of which he [war] consists of as a unit, we would better imagine two wrestlers. Each seeks to bend the other to his will through physical force; his immediate purpose is to overthrow the other, rendering him incapable of any resistance. This is the *Grundvorstellung* of war; everything else is the same as modifications.<sup>893</sup>

Clausewitz made an abstraction of the warlike element to depict a *Grundvorstellung des Krieges*, thus an indicative conceptual starting point derived from the *Urbestimmung*. He had already, in the era of reform, tried to establish true concepts of the *Kriegskunst* to derive more realistic expectations about war for theorizing strategy. The opening passage projected the analogy of war with a *Zweikampf*, a duel or bout, between two contending wrestlers in a polemic tone against other non-stringent definitions. The passage is almost identical to the one present in *Vom Kriege*. However, the last sentence was removed in the revision.

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<sup>890</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], 'Schlußbemerkungen zum 1ten Buch', *Schriften* (1990), 646-47

<sup>891</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges' in *Schriften* (1990), 630-36

<sup>892</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges' in *Schriften* (1990), 630-36. Clausewitz referred to the *chapters* on attack and defence among others, not to the *books*. This indicates an early time of writing in the frame of the small volume. His later notes on the file, made in 1827, pinpointed and reframed passages for the new chapter to answer the new question; 'What is war?'; instead of his initial one - what is the purpose of war?

<sup>893</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges' in *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 630 'Wir wollen nicht erst eine schwerfällige publizistische Definition des Krieges hinein steigen, sondern uns an das Element desselben halten an den Zweikampf. Der Krieg ist nichts als ein erweiterter Zweikampf. Wollen wir uns aber die Unzahl der Zweikämpfe aus denen er besteht als Einheit denken, so tun wir besser, uns zwei Ringende vorzustellen. Jeder sucht den Anderen durch physische Gewalt zur Erhüllung seines Willens zu zwingen; sein nächster Zweck ist ihn niederzuwerfen und dadurch zu jedem Widerstand unfähig zu machen. Dies ist die Grundvorstellung des Krieges; alles Uebrigende sind Modifikationen desselben.'

The wrestler depicted is seemingly also the commander as indicated earlier. The match was an abstraction to depict real personified fighting, commander against commander. Strategy was the art of the commander, the highest form of military activity. The way to learn strategy was through a true understanding of concepts and personified epitomes of performance. Clausewitz refuted any clever generic keys to success, such as generic schemes of movement or high ground. War was about physical force, and strategy about timely inner coherence of effort.

The larger political function of war was of course clear and present, but the real political purpose was outside the warlike element following the *Urbestimmung* on principle. The warlike act as dynamics of force directed by the commander and his strategic aim after a political decision was the scope of theoretical enquiry. According to Clausewitz's philosophical model real-life limitations and deviations – political, moral and military – were nothing but modifications of the theoretical *Grundvorstellung*, which followed the *Urbestimmung*.

Remember, Clausewitz had the theoretical purpose to make a point about the neglect of the warlike element by generations inclined to a scientification of war and to boost realism in military thought. Therefore, he argued, in a polemic tone, it was theoretically 'absurd' to include limitations in the concept of war, as depicted by the *Grundvorstellung*. Consequently, in the theoretical essence of war the political purpose and military aim coincided completely, a view he revised later:

Power equips itself with the inventions of art and science to use force. Imperceptible, hardly any limitations to speak of, only those decided upon by oneself, under the name of moral conventions, accompany war without weakening its power. Force, by which I mean physical force (because there is no such a thing as moral force outside the concept of the state and the law), is thus the means, and to compel our enemy to comply with our will is the purpose...This robbery of the firmness to resist is the actual overthrow of the wrestler. For the political purpose it is the means, and for the warlike act it is the aim, on this aim, on this warlike purpose the attention of theory will now be focused.<sup>894</sup>

Clausewitz attacked conventional military theory and moral thought; his targets were the '*menschenfreundliche Seelen*' thus people who believed that general progress steered war itself. He attacked professionals who in this line argued that '*künstliches*

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<sup>894</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 630. 'Der Krieg ist nichts als ein erweiterter Zweikampf...Die Gewalt rüstet sich mit den Erfindungen der Künste und Wissenschaften aus um der Gewalt zu begegnen. Unmerkliche, kaum nennenswerte Beschränkungen, die sich selbst setzt, unter dem Namen völkerrechtliche Sitte, begleiten sie, ohne ihre Kraft im mindesten zu schwächen. Gewalt, d.h. Physische Gewalt (denn eine moralische giebt es außer dem Begriff des Staates und Gesetzes nicht) ist also das Mittel-, dem Feind unsern Willen aufzudringen ist der Zweck... Dieses Rauben aller Widerstandsfähigkeit ist das eigentliche Niederwerfen des Ringers. Für den politischen Zweck ist es das Mittel für den kriegerischen Akt ist es das Ziel, auf dieses Ziel; auf diesen kriegerischen Zweck ist zunächst die Aufmerksamkeit der Theorie zu richten.'

*Niederwerfen*’, thus an artistic overthrow of a people was possible with finesse to limit bloodshed. It was a great mistake, he asserted, to accept this theoretical point of view as the true tendency of the *Kriegskunst*. Such intellectual mistakes, which appeared from bonhomie, were the worst and must be destroyed to arrive at a proper military understanding.

The premier determining principle of modern war was enmity, not political courtesy. Force *per se* was simply a truer theoretical starting point than assumptions about patterns and compliance. In his opinion such propositions were more or less wishful thinking, since fighting was a free choice for every people, nation and state to make the utmost use of. The accomplishment of desire by force was only limited by individual good will. He wanted to make clear that every attempt to fix artistic and scientific values to a warlike effort in general *a priori*, both small and large, was doomed to failure. Clausewitz here invented the concept of *Wechselwirkungen*, i.e. reciprocal actions and effects, to make clear the boundless logic of escalation and uncertainty in the effort required for a warlike enterprise. He stressed, indeed, the dynamics of war beyond predictable values as a fundamental theoretical tone:

Now it turns out when we place the first cornerstone to the theory of war, that we are dealing with a subject matter which is a product of a continual *Wechselwirkungen* [reciprocal actions/effects], and it is difficult, nay impossible, to gain an absolute fixed point, and a standard of the aim [*Ziel*] we should set for our warlike enterprise, plus a standard of the means to use, concerning both its scope and its energy. Indeed there are always counterweights present among people, which are composed of constitutions, habits, conventions, culture, and the character of the people; the only trouble is that these things never set fixed limits [cf. *gemeinschaftliches Produkt*], so it is not possible to argue in a particular case whether a higher degree of effort [*Anstrengung*] would have been possible.<sup>895</sup>

This can be compared to the text that put forward a new standpoint on the theory of war, which outlined questions that conforms to these propositions. The sharp consequence of force, thus the philosophical logic of the warlike element, was however hardly perceptible in experience, instead often transformed beyond empirical recognition. Clausewitz described this as modifications, different reductions of the *Urbestimmung* - the simple swift principle of war, similar to the text on progression

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<sup>895</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], ‘1tes Kapitel - Zweck des Krieges’, *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 631-32. ‘So zeigt sich indem wir den ersten Grundstein zur Theorie des Krieges legen wollen, daß wir es mit einem Gegenstand zu thun haben, der ein Produkt unaufhörlicher Wechselwirkungen, und wo es schwer, ja unmöglich ist einen absolut festen Punkt zu gewinnen, nämlich ein Maß in dem Ziel, was wir unserer kriegerischen Unternehmung setzen sollen, und ein Maß in den Mittel die anzuwenden sind, so wohl was ihren Umfang, als ihre Energie betrifft. Freilich finden sich bei den Völkern immer Gegengewichte, welche aus Verfassung, Gewohnheit, Sitte, Kultur, Volks Charakter zusammen gesetzt sind, allein das Uebel ist, daß diese Dinge doch niemals absolute Grenzen setzen, so daß man in keinem einzelnen Fall sagen kann, ob nicht ein höher Grad der Anstrengung möglich gewesen wäre.’

and stagnation. These were for example political considerations, the unequal strength of defence and attack. Even if the final political purpose of war was not always to annihilate an opponent the implied threat of this principle, *Vernichtung*, would always be present in war.

The pressure arising would however be experienced differently depending on the situation, public spirit, as well as individual character and willpower. For example the pressure on Russia was smaller at Tilsit in 1807 than in Moscow in 1812. The weakness of Prussia to accept the transit of Bernadotte's corps in 1805 would not have occurred in 1792 and so on. A 'pedantic weighting of physical force and diplomatic papers' was not the right way to sound military reasoning and could never be a substitute for good practical strategic judgement.

At this point it is important to recognize Clausewitz's realism, and to view his philosophical model outlining and theorizing the warlike element in context. It was obvious to Clausewitz that *Politik* in terms of statecraft interacted with the *Kriegskunst* to make the conduct of war purposeful. That was however a question addressed in the part about the war plan according to Clausewitz's analytical structure. The following quote explicitly points out his view of the faulty habit of neglecting *Politik* in military planning and military theory. It makes perfectly clear that he, even when starting to write, had no stereotyped view of military efforts, neither in theory nor in practice:

The greater these difficulties now are, the more reason to feel inclined to circumvent them all with a stroke of the pen and with logical stringency to insist that the political purpose and the condition of the enemy have no influence on the conduct of war, so one stretches oneself to the utmost and must consequently always invest the utmost effort. But such a pen-stroke would be a book law and nothing for the real world. Assuming in addition that every utmost effort was an absolute, which could be easily applied, one must nevertheless concede that the human spirit would hardly capitulate to such logical tyranny. In many cases an expenditure of force of no utility would arise, which must find a counterweight in other *Grundsätze der Regierungskunst* [precepts of statecraft]; an effort of the will would be required, that would be incommensurate with the prescribed purpose, and can thus not be brought to life, for human will never derives its strength from logical quibble.<sup>896</sup>

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<sup>896</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel - Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 633-34. 'Je größer nun diese Schwierigkeiten sind, um so mehr fühlt sich der Verstand geneigt, sie alle mit einem Federstrich zu umgehen und mit logischer Strenge darin zu beharren daß der politische Zweck und der Zustand des Gegners keinen Einfluß auf die Kriegführung haben, daß man sich jedesmal auf das Aeüßerste gefaßt machen und jedesmal die äußerste Anstrengung daran setzen müsse. Aber ein solcher Federstreich würde ein Büchergesetz werden und keins für die wirkliche Welt. Gesetzt auch jenes Aeüßerste der Anstrengung wäre ein Absolutes, welche leicht gefunden werden könnte, so muß man doch gestehen, daß der menschliche Geist sich dieser logischen Tiranney schwerlich unterwerfen würde. Es würde in manchen Fällen ein unnützer Kraftaufwand entstehen, welche[r] in anderen Grundsätzen der Regierungskunst ein Gegengewicht finden müßte; eine Anstrengung des Willens würde erfordert werden, die mit dem vorgesetzten Zweck nicht im Gleichgewicht stände, und also nicht ins Leben gerufen



Clausewitz did indeed address the political influence on war planning from the first texts and *Politik* was not something he added at the end in 'becoming a realist'. On the contrary he regarded other military thought as paying too little attention to this aspect. He continued to illuminate the mismatch between *a priori* rules of conduct in military literature and the diversity of reality; his purpose being to destroy the prospect of the *absolute* in conventional theory; the clear-cut military pattern for success. Clausewitz projected instead the dynamics of action in the play of possibilities, luck, bad luck and probability.

Political influence on war was described as: 'Finally the political conditions from which war arises change its nature from time to time and weaken war's natural power, sometimes more sometimes less.'<sup>897</sup> So, the early view of the element of *Politik* concerned the political purpose of war as well as weakening and strengthening the power of war. Theory should consequently only establish laws of thought, which permitted dynamics of the warlike element to move freely. This corresponded to Clausewitz's interpretation of the period 1792-1806 as a time when war remade itself frequently, disproving closed strategic systems. A theory that took the human into consideration could only be about a *Spielraum* for the 'approximate' (*das Ungefähr*) and not the 'absolute': as generic keys to success. Clausewitz's view of *Politik* was consistent with this conclusion and he summarized what theory could achieve for the practice of command as:

Should theory leave him [war] here? To proceed in absolute rules and keys by himself? Then [theory] is of no use for life. Theory should also consider the human, practical intellectual proficiency (*Muthe*): it should make a place for courage, boldness itself. The *Kriegskunst* deals with living and moral powers; from that follows that theory can never achieve the absolute and certain; a *Spielraum* for the approximate therefore remains everywhere; and notably as much in the largest as in the smallest [strategic details]. Where this approximate stands on one side, courage and self-confidence must enter on the other to fill the gaps. As large as these are, so large may the *Spielraum* for everyone be. Courage and confidence are thus a very essential, indispensable principle. Theory should thus pose only such laws of thought in which every necessary and most noble warlike virtue in all its different shades can move freely. – Also in daring there is cleverness and even prudence as well; only that it is measured in different coin.<sup>898</sup>

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werden könnte, denn der menschliche Wille erhält seine Stärke niemals durch logische Spitzfindigkeiten.'

<sup>897</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel - Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf.632. 'Endlich verändern die politischen Verhältnisse, aus denen der Krieg hervor tritt, seine Natur von Zeit zu Zeit und schwächen bald mehr bald weniger seine natürliche Kraft.'

<sup>898</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf.634. 'Soll die Theorie ihn hier verlassen? sich in absoluten Regeln und Schlüssen selbstgefällig fortbewegen? Dann ist sie unnützt fürs Leben. Die Theorie soll auch das Menschliche berücksichtigen, auch dem Muthe, der Kühnheit, selbst der Verwegenheit soll sie ihren Platz gönnen. Die Kriegskunst hat es mit lebendigen und mit moralischen Kräften zu thun; darus

The contradiction of outcomes was elaborated. In 1814 Bonaparte's power had been defeated by the destruction of his army and the conquering of Paris. The fall of Moscow had on the other hand not decided anything. There were indeed occasions where the conquering of a whole country was not enough to make a people defenceless. This could happen when the courage and the spirit of a people remained intact after combat. Another source of continual resistance was support from foreign countries. The saving of Spain had for example originated from Portugal, which was followed by Clausewitz with his preliminary outline of the concept of *Schwerpunkt* without using the term:

Thus in the individual case it depends on ascertaining the point, on which the political being of the enemy relies as his supporting fulcrum, and which can shake him and bring about his fall. We will speak much more about this elsewhere, though this subject cannot be exhausted by general laws of thought, because it is dependent on the individuality of every case...<sup>899</sup>

The conclusion was that ideas on strategy must have the warlike element in mind, not get lost in too-far-reaching speculation. To Clausewitz the conduct of war posited a few very simple ideas, extensively modified in reality however. The second text addressed the means of war to project the logic of the warlike element under the principle of *Vernichtung*, hence the constant underlying threat of annihilation. 'Where one sends armed people, there of necessity underlies the idea of a combat.'<sup>900</sup> Possible combats must in strategy be considered as real. He argued that strategy must be thought of as a chain constructed of combats.

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folgt, daß sie nirgend das Absolute und Gewisse erreichen kann; es bleibt daher überall dem Ungefähr ein Spielraum; und zwar grade eben so viel bei dem Größten wie bei dem Kleinsten. Wo dieses Ungefähr auf die eine Seite steht, muß Muth und Selbstvertrauen auf die andere treten, und die Lücke ausfüllen. So groß wie diese sind, so groß darf der Spielraum für jenes werden. Muth und Selbstvertrauen sind also ein dem Kriege ganz wesentliches, ganz unentbehrliches Princip. Die Theorie soll also nur solche Gesetze aufstellen, in welchen sich jene nothwendigen und edelsten der kriegesischen Tugenden in allen ihren Graden und Veränderungen frei bewegen können. – Auch im Wagen giebt es noch eine Klugheit, und eben so gut eine Vorsicht, nur daß sie nach einem anderen Münzfuß berechnet sind.'

<sup>899</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], 'Ites Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf.635. 'Es kommt also im einzelnen Fall darauf an den Punkt auszumitteln, auf welchem das politische Dasein des Gegners wie auf seinem Unterstützungspunkt ruht, und in welchem dasselbe erschüttert und zum Sturz gebracht werden kann. Wir werden an anderen Orten darüber noch Manches zu sagen haben, obgleich sich dieser Gegenstand durch allgemeine Gesetze nicht erschöpfen läßt, weil er von der Individualität der Fälle abhängt...'

<sup>900</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], 'II tes Kapitel. Mittel des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 636-39, cf.637. 'Da wo man bewaffnete Menchen hinschickt, liegt nothwendig die Idee eines Gefechtes zum Grunde.' Clausewitz noted later on this text that it was going to be used as chapter one of book three.

This standpoint was also pinpointed in Clausewitz's study of the Polish warrior king Jan Sobiesky's strategy. Sobiesky's enemies had been unable to coherently frame combat, which had contributed to his splendid success.<sup>901</sup> This chapter set out to establish the idea of combat based on consequences of annihilation as the main underlying principle of war, so other political means and political moderation were here simply outside inner logic: 'The purpose of war is the annihilation of enemy fighting forces and the overthrow of the enemy state. For this there is, strictly, only one means, namely the one war itself serves, because political means has nothing to do with this. This one means is combat or rather the sum of great and small combats from which alone it is constituted.'<sup>902</sup>

Note that the *Vorstellung* of *Zweikampf* to depict the concept of war was also present in other accounts, such as Wilhelm Traugott Krug's exposition of the '*System der Kriegswissenschaften*', published 1815. This account also addressed several concept intimate to Clausewitz's exposition as 'the element of war', 'the purpose of war' and 'kinds of war', which further underpin the contention that Clausewitz did not invent his way of thinking and core concepts all by himself in splendid isolation.<sup>903</sup>

The next four texts addressed what Clausewitz had described previously as '*Sperrad*', locking or ratchet wheels, and reductions of action (*Ermäßigungen der Handlung*) to comprehend the inconsistency between the warlike element and experience. The gap was conceptualized in four interacting components, somewhat later brought together as the 'atmosphere of war' and 'general friction'. It was of course also a theoretical attack on scholarly strategy and the absolute to further underline what is approximate in strategic thinking. The premier component for this purpose was friction in war, the unexpected interference between war on paper and war in reality. Friction made the simple ideas of war difficult to comprehend in real war, especially for people who had not experienced war. What appeared simple (*leicht*) became difficult and heavy (*schwer*) to accomplish in reality.

The conceptual idea was to pinpoint the unexpected, which transformed most action away from the original idea; a problem but nevertheless a premise for command to cope with. A genius was not, for Clausewitz, a magician who found clever strategic keys to success, but rather a person who had the ability to overcome friction. A major reason why the general and the student of strategy should study the history of war was to grasp the phenomena of friction in military action, so as to be intellectually

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<sup>901</sup> Clausewitz [1822-23], 'Sobiesky', *Werke*, Vol 10/10, 3-14. Clausewitz referred to Condé's observations of Sobiesky in the text, which might indicate an even earlier date of writing, closer to the studies of the wars of Louis XIV. I will come back to this study in the next chapter, but the date of 1829 interpreted in other accounts seems unlikely.

<sup>902</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], 'II tes Kapitel. 'Mittel des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 636-39, cf. 636. 'Der Zweck des Krieges ist die Vernichtung der feindlichen Streitkräfte und das Niderwerfen des feindlichen Staates. Dazu giebt es genau betrachtet, nur ein Mittel, nämlich nur eines dessen der Krieg sich selbst bedient, denn die politischen gehören nicht hier her. Dieses eine Mittel ist das Gefecht oder vielmehr die Summe von großen und kleinen Gefechten aus denen es besteht, und ganz allein besteht.'

<sup>903</sup> Wilhelm Traugott Krug, *System der Kriegswissenschaften und ihrer Literatur, enzyklopisch dargestellt* (Leipzig: Rein, 1815), 1-8

prepared to confront the inconsistency of war in the situation of command. Clausewitz explained his point here by thinking strategy in war as one thing, thus as multisided interaction rather than as one-sided prescriptions that neglected the impact of war itself on the cause of events. To make his point crystal clear he pejoratively compared his intellectual targets, the true theorists of war (*der richtige Theoretiker*), with a swimming champion out of the water:

Action in war is a movement in a hampering medium. Equally little can one do the most natural and most simple movement in water, such as just walking with ease and precision, as one can achieve the most mediocre in war with normal strength. Therefore the true theorist resembles a champion swimmer for whose movement water is necessary, while on dry land a person training without thinking of water seems grotesque and exaggerated; but more, theorists who have never dived, or who do not know how to abstract anything general from their own experience are unpractical and lacking in taste, because they can teach only what everyone can do anyway – walking.<sup>904</sup>

The enquiry turned to danger in war as an aspect of friction, which most people seemed to have only vague ideas about before experiencing war. In excitement people often believed the ‘golden aim of victory’ was just a couple of steps ahead and honour waiting nearby. Such moments were however very few in war and not the work of a pulse beat. Clausewitz continued instead to describe the moment of approaching the thunder of combat and the first experience of fierce combat when the young man’s heroic fantasy of war was crossed by fear.

This of course had an effect on clear thinking: ‘None of these different dense layers of fear will touch a newcomer without feeling that the light of thought will move through other means and diffract into in other rays of light than the one in speculative activity...’<sup>905</sup> It was true that experience turned the first sensations of combat into indifference quite fast, but danger and fear had to be part of a true recognition of war if theory was to support practice.

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<sup>904</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], ‘III tes Kapitel. ‘Friktion im Kriege’, *Schriften* (1990), 639-41, cf. 640-41. ‘Das Handeln im Kriege ist eine Bewegung im erschwerenden Mittel. So wenig man im Stande ist im Wasser die natürlichste und einfachste Bewegung, das bloße Gehen mit Leichtigkeit und Präzision zu thun, so wenig kann man im Krieg mit gewöhnlichen Kräften auch nur die Linie des Mittelmäßigen halten. Daher kommt es daß der richtige Theoretiker wie ein Schwimmmeister erscheint der Bewegungen die fürs Wasser nöthig sind, auf dem Trocken üben läßt und die denen grotesk und übertrieben vorkommen die nicht ans Wasser denken; daher kommt es aber auch, daß Theoretiker die selbst nie untergetaucht haben, oder von ihren eigenen Erfahrungen nichts Allgemeines zu abstrahiren wissen unpraktisch und selbst abgeschmakt sind, weil sie nur das lehren, was ein jeder kann – Gehen.’

<sup>905</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], ‘4tes Kapitel. Von der Gefahr im Kriege’, *Schriften* (1990), 642-43. ‘Keine dieser verschiedenen Dichtigkeit-Schichten der Gefahr wird ein Neuling berühren ohne zu fühlen, daß das Licht der Gedanken sich hier durch andere Mittel bewege und in anderen Strahlen gebrochen werde als bei der Spekulative Thätigkeit...’

With similar scope the impact of physical exertion in war was outlined. This impact had no fixed magnitude that could be decided upon by the 'theoretical police'. If forces were not wasted, one could speak of a coefficient of all forces, but with an unknown driving potential. The peculiarity of human effort was that a higher degree of tension or impending disaster could increase performance. Clausewitz wanted to make clear to the untrained observer the very close interaction, the wild bond of physical and moral forces. He concluded his exposition of friction, danger and physical exertion by observing the role of feeling (cf. Kant's schema) as a form of higher practical judgement.<sup>906</sup>

In the same way, briefly and to the point, news and intelligence in war were treated (*Nachrichten im Kriege*), meaning simply the knowledge one had about the enemy and the hostile country to form a basic comprehension underpinning military ideas, plans and action. Clausewitz pondered the shortcomings and metamorphism of this type of knowledge. The foundation for constructing a war was indeed unstable, which made the risk of implosion clear and present. Intelligence was often contradictory and an even larger amount of information would be false.

Clausewitz's view of clear knowledge to support military action was indeed pessimistic but was as well a premise for theory. An officer had to be able to distinguish between people and subject matter following the law of probability. The uncertainty and elusiveness of information was present in prudent planning in the office outside the sphere of war as well as when planning under great pressure in war. People would choose and expand information, true or false, to support their conclusions and hopes to build an image of ever-shifting colours: 'This difficulty to see right, constitutes one of the largest frictions in war, causes things to appear quite differently from how one imagined; the impression of sensations is stronger than the *Vorstellung* of the conscious calculus...'<sup>907</sup> So, Clausewitz projected a Kantian style of filter between things and their appearance for strategic thought. His recognition is important and striking indeed.

The final part of book one conceptualized the impact of danger, physical exertion, news and intelligence and friction as elements of the 'atmosphere of war', which were hampering circumstances for all activities of war (*erschwerende Mittel*). The joint effect of these circumstances was combined into the notion of general friction (*allgemeinen Friktion*). Clausewitz took the opportunity to criticize military training in the form of 'mechanical art practice', stereotyped behaviour regardless of circumstances. Peacetime training could of course never be equal to the experience of war, but it was important to train in a manner that improved the ability to cope with general friction. Clausewitz was often sceptical as to the revival of the old drillmasters,

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<sup>906</sup> Clausewitz [1817-23], '5tes Kapitel. Von der körperlichen Anstrengungen im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 643-44, cf. 644

<sup>907</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], '6tes Kapitel. Nachrichten im Kriege', *Schriften* (1990), 645-46, cf. 646. 'Diese Schwierigkeit, richtig zu sehen, welche eine der allergrößten Friktionen im Kriege ausgemacht, läßt die Dinge ganz anderes erscheinen, wie man sich gedacht hat; der Eindruck der Sinne ist stärker als die Vorstellungen des überlegenden Kalkül.'

*Exeziermeisters*, who focused on form rather than effect, in addition neglecting the new condition of citizen-soldiers.

The chapter on the 'warlike Genius' in *Vom Kriege* did not exist in any earlier version, at least not as a preserved text. It may be that Clausewitz did not write an initial text on this matter due to the sloppy use of the term genius by other military writers, implying the association to a magician and a panacea. Yet he used the term '*der kriegsgerische Genius*', warlike genius, in the line of other, earlier concepts associated to the warlike element. The genius in mind was projected as a consequence of general friction, a person who could overcome friction in command; in that sense see things right in war, as elucidated by the analogy of *Nebel* - fog: 'War is the realm of uncertainty; three-quarters of the matter with which action in war is constructed are situated in fog, a more or less profound uncertainty.'<sup>908</sup> The text on the warlike genius was probably written in conjunction with the outline of general friction, but expanded in late 1827-1828 to further elaborate the political side of high command.

#### CLARIFYING THE WARLIKE ELEMENT AS THE *GEIST* OF MODERN STRATEGY

The transmigration from the small volume to *Vom Kriege* also clearly took place in Book 3. This set of texts addressed the '*wirksamen Elemente im Kriege*' in eighteen chapters. Those were aspects of the warlike element effective in war following the *Urbestimmung*.<sup>909</sup> The polemic tone against older falsification of military theory continued. In addition most of these texts appear to have been written after the study of Friedrich's strategy. It seems appropriate to interpret these texts, at least several, in relation to the initial ambition to explain the *Geist* of modern strategy and then to clarify the impact of warlike element following the *Urbestimmung*, neglected in older theory.<sup>910</sup> Thus, the cryptic title '*Von der Strategie Überhaupt*' printed in *Vom Kriege* requires explanation to be understandable.

The first chapter made a short exposition of strategy, starting with a detailed definition. It clarified Clausewitz's view of strategy between combat and *Politik*. Strategy, he argued, can no longer be made in the cabinet in remote capitals as in olden times; instead it had to be made in the field near action to see things in their right light to be able to handle the dynamics and adopt proper courses of action. By implication the cabinet had to move into the field near the army field headquarters to keep track of the continuing political modifications of fighting.

Clausewitz's pragmatic view relied on how Prussia's headquarters had interacted with the king and the government in the field during the War of Liberation between 1813

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<sup>908</sup> Clausewitz [1817-28], 'Der Kriegerische Genius', *Vom Kriege* 1:3, 231-52, cf.233. 'Der Krieg ist das Gebiet der Ungewißheit; drei Vierteile derjenigen Dinge, worauf das Handeln im Kriege gebaut wird, liegen im Nebel einer mehr oder weinger großen Ungewißheit.'

<sup>909</sup> Clausewitz [1824], 'Übersicht', *Vom Kriege* 4:1, 419

<sup>910</sup> Schering suggested that all chapters in Book 3 belonged to the Small Volume and were written in Koblenz. This seems not entirely right in respect to the study of Friedrich's campaigns, but individual texts may be from that time. See Malmsten-Schering, *Wehrphilosophie*, 250-51

and 1815. Russia and Austria had also employed a similar model. The main battle and its immediate political consequences were in focus, which then made the military-political decision action cycle very tight.<sup>911</sup> Strategic decisions needed to be made quickly near the action to grasp the reciprocity of combat and politics. His view around 1823 of military and civilian relations is quite similar to the one he expressed later in Book 8 in 1827. He had indeed modest scope for what theory could stipulate as rules of thought for strategy.

This makes it perfectly clear that Clausewitz's change of viewpoint in 1827 was not about the practical political primacy over strategy, which was never an issue. Political leadership had however to be in place to handle the dynamics properly. The close practical relation of cabinet and military high command was indeed clear, as this quote probably from the Small Volume indicates:

Strategy is the use of combats for the purpose of war; thus it must lay down an aim for the entire warlike act, which corresponds to the [political] purpose of the same, that is to say it [strategy] outlines the war plan, and to this aim the line of actions link up, which should lead to the same, that is to say it [strategy] outlines the individual campaigns and arranges the individual combats in these. As most of these matters can only be determined according to circumstances not always applying, to many other, more individually- oriented determinations impossible to be given in advance, it is self-evident that strategy must move along into the field, to arrange the particular on the spot and to make the modifications [cf. of the warlike element] to the whole that are continually necessary. It [strategy] can thus not even for a moment remove its hand from the work [quite the same view as later in Book 8]. That one has not always viewed the matter so, at least regarding the whole, is proved by the previous habit of having the strategy in the cabinet and not with the army. This is only valid if the cabinet stays so close to the army that it can be assumed to be the Grand Headquarters itself. Thus, theory will follow strategy in this outline [cf. Small Volume], or more precisely, it [theory] will illuminate things per se and their mutual relations, and bring out the little that gives the *Grundsatz* or rule.<sup>912</sup>

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<sup>911</sup> This can be compared with today's debate on military–civilian relations.

<sup>912</sup> Clausewitz, [1823-24], 'Strategie', Vom Kriege 3:1, 345-50, cf. 345-46. 'Die Strategie ist der Gebrauch des Gefechts zum Zweck des Kriegerischen; sie muß also dem ganzen kriegerischen Akt ein Ziel setzen, welches dem Zweck desselben entspricht, d. h. sie entwirft den Kriegsplan, und an dieses Ziel knüpft sie die Reihe der Handlungen an, welche zu demselben führen sollen, d. h. sie macht die Entwürfe zu den einzelnen Feldzügen und ordnet in diesen die einzelnen Gefechte an. Da sich alle diese Dinge meistens nur nach Voraussetzungen bestimmen lassen, die nicht alle zutreffen, eine Menge anderer, mehr ins einzelne gehender Bestimmungen sich aber gar nicht vorher geben lassen, so folgt von selbst, daß die Strategie mit ins Feld ziehen muß, um das Einzelne an Ort und Stelle anzuordnen und für das Ganze die Modifikationen zu treffen, die unaufhörlich erforderlich werden. Sie kann also ihre Hand in keinem Augenblick von dem Werke abziehen. Daß man dies, wenigstens was das Ganze betrifft, nicht immer so angesehen hat, beweist die frühere Gewohnheit, die Strategie im Kabinett zu haben und nicht bei der Armee, welches nur dann zulässig ist, wenn das Kabinett dem Heer so nahe bleibt, daß es für das große Hauptquartier desselben genommen werden kann. Die Theorie wird also der

Clausewitz referred to the many political and military aspects that were involved in the largest way of war (*größten Art der Krieg*).<sup>913</sup> To make the political/military interface clear he outlined his view of good strategy. A prince or a commander who could conduct war with political purpose and military means in balance, not do too little and not too much, was a proven genius in Clausewitz's opinion. The evidence of genius was not found in any clever scheme of action but in the final outcome – success. If the enquiry found no harmony in the outcome between means and purpose there would be no genius present in the case.

This view corresponded clearly to his interpretation of Friedrich's strategy, which was projected as the epitome of a brilliant economy of war. The strategic greatness of *Alte Fritz* was not nested in beautiful marches and manoeuvres as previous theory had taught, instead, Clausewitz argued: 'We must primarily much more admire the wisdom of the king who pursued a large aim with his limited forces, and undertook nothing to which those forces did not correspond, and did just enough to achieve his purpose.'<sup>914</sup> Clausewitz concluded with a point about the difficulty of friction and that all literature had neglected this aspect.

His final words in the chapter introducing strategy in general relate to the view of outline that appears in the first sketches for Book 2: 'We wished to give our *Vorstellungen* more clarity with this example [Friedrich] and hurry now to the end of this chapter to say that we in our exposition of strategy will characterize in our own way those objects that appear to us the most important. These can be of physical or intellectual nature, proceed from the particular to the composed and end with the context of the whole warlike act, that is to say the war and campaign plan.'<sup>915</sup>

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Strategie in diesem Entwurfe folgen, oder richtiger gesagt, sie wird die Dinge an sich und in ihren Verhältnissen zueinander beleuchten und das wenige herausheben, was sich als Grundsatz oder Regel ergibt.'

<sup>913</sup> Clausewitz stated he had elaborated these aspects further in the first chapter, which clearly indicate this text was written in the frame of the Small Volume. The chapter in mind was consequently the initial way-pointing chapter on the purpose of war; cf. Clausewitz [1817-24], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36. Clausewitz noted later on the following chapter 'Mittel im Kriege' that it was going to be used for a revision of the first chapter in Book 3, which never took place. Hahlweg inserted partly this text in editing *Vom Kriege*, which of course never was the intension of Clausewitz. He sanitized the text however by removing the initial part on the logic of 'Vernichtung' that excluded other political means from the theoretical core.

<sup>914</sup> Clausewitz, [1823-24], 'Strategie', *Vom Kriege* 3:1, 345-50, cf.348. 'Wir müssen vielmehr zuvörderst des Königs Weisheit bewundern, der bei seinen beschränkten Kräften ein großes Ziel verfolgend, nicht unternahm, was diesen Kräften nicht entsprochen hätte, und gerade genug um seinen Zweck zu errichten.'

<sup>915</sup> Clausewitz, [1823-24], 'Strategie', *Vom Kriege* 3:1, 345-50, cf.350. 'Wir haben durch dieses Beispiel [Friedrich] dem Gange unserer Vorstellungen mehr Klarheit geben wollen und eilen nun zum Schluß dieses Kapitels zu sagen, daß wir in unserer Darstellung der Strategie diejenigen einzelnen Gegenstände derselben, welche uns die wichtigsten scheinen, sie mögen nun materieller oder geistiger Natur sein, auf unsere Weise charakterisieren, von dem



Book 3 had a split focus, between criticism of older theory and an evaluation of ruling *Grundsätze* in modern strategy. The first part argued for the need to consider strategy as a whole and not in separate minor details as in the '*Korpralswuth*' Gneisenau had described to Tsar Alexander. Clausewitz began to criticize the old way of thinking strategy in isolated abstract elements to find right general *a priori* values. He proposed instead that strategy must be viewed as a whole, because the multiple elements were so intimately interwoven; thereof perhaps the emphasis on the warlike element. This fact made every analysis based on separation lifeless and unreal: 'We will stay in the world of complete appearances and not pursue our analysis further than to make the ideas we present clear every time, not through speculative enquiry but through the impression of the total appearance of war.'<sup>916</sup> This statement illuminated Clausewitz's analytical posture: theorize the obviously observable. It was common sense to him: the enquiry should not be pursued too far to uncover sophisticated hidden theoretical keys.

A major issue for Clausewitz was to establish a view of the whole to include *Moralische Grössen*, thus the moral dimensions in theory, similar to Kant's categorical imperative. Older theory had excluded the elusive role of human forces in the *Kriegskunst*. This he continued to develop in a set of short chapters treating warlike human potencies, which suggests that these pieces were also written early with the Small Volume in mind. They addressed the talent of the commander, the warlike virtue of the army and what was warlike in the spirit of people, boldness and perseverance (*Beharrlichkeit*).

Clausewitz tried to outline fighting as individual and human, so as to move away from older military artistic obsessions with high ground, marching patterns, lines and angles. War more than any other human activity had a very strange peculiarity. Things one experienced closely in war appeared totally different from one's previous ideas. His aim was here to prove that physical forces and effects cannot be separated from individual, elusive, moral and human ones in thinking strategy.<sup>917</sup> To think strategy properly one had to view moral and physical forces as merged, which underpinned the theoretical view, to consider every case individually – thus the approach of historicism, more or less, to the study of human action.

The next part outlined fighting for modern strategy. First Clausewitz defined the superiority of numbers as the most common principle of victory in strategy as well as in tactics.<sup>918</sup> The first general *Grundsatz* of strategy was therefore to employ the greatest possible force at the decisive point for combat. This had been valid in history

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Einzelnen zum Zusammengesetzten fortschreiten und mit dem Zusammenhang des ganzen kriegerischen Aktes, d. h. mit dem Kriegs- und Feldzugsplan schließen werden.'

<sup>916</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Elemente der Strategie', *Vom Kriege* 3:2, 354-55 'Wir wollen uns an die Welt der Totalerscheinungen halten und unsere Analyse nicht weitertreiben, als jedesmal zur Verständlichkeit des Gedankens notwendig ist, den wir mitteilen wollen, und der uns nicht etwa bei einer spekulativen Untersuchung, sondern durch den Eindruck der Totalerscheinungen des Krieges geworden ist.'

<sup>917</sup> Clausewitz. [1817-24], 'Die Moralischen Hauptpotenzen', *Vom Kriege* 3:4, 359-60; 'Kriegerische Tugend des Heeres', *Vom Kriege* 3:5, 361-65; 'Die Kühnheit', *Vom Kriege* 3:6, 366-70; 'Beharrlichkeit', *Vom Kriege* 3:7, 371-72

<sup>918</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Überlegenheit der Zahl', *Vom Kriege* 3:8, 373-78

since Marathon. European armies were nowadays so very similar that it was seemingly impossible to defeat an enemy of double strength in battle.

The only exceptions he could find in modern European history were Friedrich's victories at Leuthen and Roßbach. The victory of Karl XII at Narva in 1700 was not relevant because the Russians were not Europeans at that time, in Clausewitz's opinion. Strength at the decisive point (*entscheidende Punkt*) was thus generally essential for Prussia's conditions.<sup>919</sup> The first rule of thought would consequently be to move into the field with an army as strong as possible, sounding like a truism but in fact not so, in Clausewitz's opinion. The old literature had not regarded relative strength as essential, which he illustrated with the gurus of his youth, Massenbach and Tempelhoff.

Another proof of this faulty view he found in the 'marvellous idea' of some critical military writer, likely Tempelhoff, namely the existence of a 'normal military strength', which implied that forces above a certain size were of no use and counter-productive. Absolute military strength, the size of forces raised, was no military theoretical problem to Clausewitz but a purely political decision. In a polemical tone against older literature he stated that this was a given condition and the commander had to do his best with what he had. The warlike act and the subject of military-theoretical investigation started behind this given line. This further illustrates Clausewitz's realistic understanding and practical scope of political-military interaction.

Skilful command was about the transformation of 'absolute strength' given by the government to best possible relative strength in battle; or to develop a course of action that avoided battle on unfavourable conditions if the prospect of victory was too poor. The way to achieve relative superiority was by clever calculation of space and time. This was also the main task of the general staff to assist the commander with. However the calculus was neither the most difficult nor decisive.

The historical record proved no major defeats explicitly due to wrong calculus in strategy. More important to victory were instead a correct estimate of the enemy, superior energy in marches and quick attacks as performed by the Great Captains at the moment of danger. This was the ability to use the two simple aspects of time and space in comparison. The view can be compared the '*Naturalistentheorie*' as previously cited from the study of Friedrich's strategy. Relative superiority was to Clausewitz one of the important aspects of modern strategy:

Relative superiority, skilled command of superior forces at the decisive point, more frequently stems from the correct evaluation of this point and the striking direction, which the forces obtain automatically from this, by the required determination to discard the unimportant in favour of the important, meaning to keep one's forces mainly together in an overwhelming mass. Friedrich the Great and Bonaparte are actually characteristic here. We herewith believe that we have returned to the superiority of numbers the importance it deserves: superiority should be considered as the basic idea, first and always sought. To hold it as a

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<sup>919</sup> Clausewitz had not yet abandoned the popular concept of 'decisive point', which indicates an early date.

necessary condition of victory would however be a complete misunderstanding of our development; on the contrary much more resides in the result, not as the value one should attribute to the strength of fighting forces in combat. If this strength is made as large as possible, the *Grundsatz* will be considered enough, and only a look at the totality decides whether combat may be avoided due to a lack of fighting forces.<sup>920</sup>

This illustrated his pragmatic view of theory fairly well. What he regarded as one of the most important aspects of strategy was not a necessary condition. So to conclude about superiority of numbers, Clausewitz returned to war as reciprocity, a free play of forces, where physical and moral aspects intermingled. The relevance of a decisive point as a scale for skilful command was nested in the correct determination of this point as well as the direction of strike. His reasoning foreshadowed the development of the '*Schwerpunkt*' to improve the vaguer concept of the '*entscheidenden Punkt*'. The relative superiority of numbers was imperative to victorious combat and was to be considered as a basic idea for the conduct of war.

Clausewitz turned to surprise as a general means to construct relative superiority, but also a general principle due to its moral effects. In tactics, surprise is present most of the time due to the compressed conditions of space and time; less however in the realms of command closer to politics. Clausewitz labelled surprise as another 'parade horse' of historical criticism, thus similar to 'key terrain', projected wrongly as generally decisive in interpreting strategic cause and effect.

Clausewitz referred to Tempelhoff's history of Friedrich's famous conduct of operations in Silesia on 22 July 1761, which had overstated the general value of surprise. Tempelhoff's historical interpretation had later become a trendy theoretical model beyond general strategic truth in Clausewitz's opinion. Surprise could of course contribute to success, but was not a necessary condition. Historical examples of really effective surprise (*folgenreicher Überraschung*) on the highest level of war were in fact very few. Clausewitz mentioned a couple of examples, such as; Bonaparte's crossing of the Alps in 1800, when the surrender of one army delivered victory in a whole theatre.

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<sup>920</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Überlegenheit der Zahl', *Vom Kriege* 3:8, 373-78, cf. 378. 'Viel häufiger hat die relative Überlegenheit, d. h. die geschickte Führung überlegener Streitkräfte auf den entscheidenden Punkt, ihren Grund in der richtigen Würdigung dieser Punkte und der treffenden Richtung, welche die Kräfte von Hause aus dadurch erhalten; in der Entschlossenheit, welche erforderlich ist, um das Unwichtige zum Besten des Wichtigen fallen zu lassen, d. h. seine Kräfte in einem überwiegenden Maße vereinigt zu halten. Darin sind namentlich Friedrich der Große und Bonaparte charakteristisch. Hiermit glauben wir der Überlegenheit in der Zahl die Wichtigkeit wiedergegeben zu haben, die ihr zukommt; sie soll als die Grundidee betrachtet, überall zuerst und nach Möglichkeit gesucht werden. Sie darum für eine notwendige Bedingung des Sieges zu halten, würde ein völliges Mißverstehen unserer Entwicklung sein; vielmehr liegt in dem Resultat derselben nichts als der Wert, welchen man auf die Stärke der Streitkräfte im Gefecht legen soll. Wird diese Stärke so groß als möglich gemacht, so ist dem Grundsatz genug geschehen, und nur der Blick auf die Gesamtheit der Verhältnisse entscheidet, ob das Gefecht wegen fehlender Streitkräfte vermieden werden darf oder nicht.'

He raised a cautious voice, not to confuse the lack of energy and activity with the effect of surprise. The moral impact of surprise was not so easy to foresee and trace.<sup>921</sup>

Stratagem or cunning (*List*) was presented with the same caution; closely related to strategy since the ancient Greeks indeed but not often present in the conduct of war. Clausewitz's attempt to make theory realistic refuted conceptions similar to magic, and a trick was completely dependent on the opponent's inability: 'Cunning lets everyone who he is going to seduce commit the mistakes in their minds, which in the end intermingle in *one* effect, suddenly changing the nature of things before their eyes. One could say about this: as the joke is a sleight of hand with ideas and words, the stratagem is a sleight of hand with action.'<sup>922</sup> The historical record displayed very few proofs of war merely as an activity of cunning. To Clausewitz strategy was simply the arrangement of combats in time and space for the purpose of using their result in a continuation. Consequently a 'striking view' (*treffender Blick*) was more important than cunning to a good commander. The importance of stratagems or tricks increased with weaker forces at hand however.<sup>923</sup>

Clausewitz elaborated two *Grundsätze* to develop the basic idea of victory in superiority of numbers to achieve relative superior strength. First the assembly of forces in space (*Sammlung der Kräfte im Raum*), and second the joining of forces in time (*Vereinigung der Kräfte in der Zeit*). In his notes on strategy from 1804 he had associated the former precept with Friedrich's strategy and the latter with modern French strategy.<sup>924</sup> The assembly of forces in space was briefly addressed in one page, more as a norm to have in mind to make division of forces a deliberate exception. The opening truism is cited even today: 'The best strategy is always to be pretty strong, first in general and next at the decisive point.'<sup>925</sup> It was here a subtle criticism of Tempelhoff's theoretical belittling of numbers. He had argued in his history of the Seven Years' War that strength could often hamper the art of the general. Clausewitz had labelled this way of thinking as 'concentrated nonsense' in the analysis of Friedrich's campaigns.<sup>926</sup>

The joining of forces in time was treated, indeed, more thoroughly. Tactics could use units successively to shape a combat and escape instant killing (*nachhaltiger Gebrauch der Kräfte*). Strategy had to be constructed on the opposite view; from the *Grundsatz*

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<sup>921</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Die Überraschung', *Vom Kriege* 3:9, 379-84

<sup>922</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Die List', *Vom Kriege* 3:10, 385-87, cf. 385. 'Der Listige läßt denjenigen, welchen er betrügen will, die Irrtümer des Verstandes selbst begehen, die zuletzt in *eine* Wirkung zusammenfließend, plötzlich das Wesen des Dinges vor seinen Augen verändern. Daher kann man sagen: wie der Witz eine Taschenspielererei mit Ideen und Vorstellungen ist, so ist die List eine Taschenspielererei mit Handlungen.'

<sup>923</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Die List', *Vom Kriege* 3:10, 385-87, cf. 386-87

<sup>924</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie - 22 Konzentrierung der Kräfte', *Schriften* (1979), 35-36

<sup>925</sup> Clausewitz [November 1823-24], 'Sammlung der Kräfte im Raum', *Vom Kriege* 3:11, 388. "Die beste Strategie ist: immer recht stark zu sein, zuerst überhaupt und demnächst auf dem entscheiden Punkt."

<sup>926</sup> See the critique in Clausewitz [1820-22], 'Die Feldzüge Friedrich des Großen 1741-1762', *Werke* Vol 10/10, 29-254, cf.64

of a simultaneous use of forces (*gleichzeitiger Gebrauch der Kräfte*). This was to Clausewitz the '*Urgesetz des Krieges*', the primordial law of thought for war, which conforms to the *Urbestimmung*.<sup>927</sup> His view was founded on the understanding of an 'impact sphere of victory', as the quote below indicates. In Clausewitz's thinking victory was a pure means with an individual political and military reach in the continuation of action, ultimately towards the final purpose of a war.

It was possible to approximate the effort required to achieve a tactical success in combat, but not the larger impact of results outside the actual combat. That was a fundamental difference to the makers of positive theory. Strategic success had no clear boundaries, but the size of victory - the weight of predominance - increased the prospect of larger success. The point Clausewitz was trying to make was to establish a strategic law of thought (*Gesetz*) regarding a simultaneous use all forces allocated and present for one strategic purpose.<sup>928</sup> Clausewitz clarified here a significant difference between tactics and strategy conceptualized on the impact-sphere of victory:

This danger extends, however, only as far, as the disorder, the state of breakup and weakening reach, with one word, the crisis, which every combat brings also to the victor. In the zone of this state of weakness the appearance of a number of relatively fresh forces is decisive [cf. Napoleon's conclusive use of the Old Guard and Clausewitz's notes of 1804 about Machiavelli's similar standpoint]. However where this weakening of victory ceases, leaving only the moral superiority any victory affords, then fresh power is no longer able to restore what has been lost, it has also been torn away. A defeated army cannot be brought back to victory through strong reserves in days. Here we find ourselves at the source of a very important difference between tactics and strategy. Tactical success, success in combat, occurs before the end of it, mostly still in the state of every breakup and weakening; strategic [success] however, that is to say the success of the entire combat, the completed victory, large or small alike, lies outside this state of affairs. Not until the success of single combats is linked to an independent whole, does the strategic success appear. Here, however the crisis ends, the forces recover their former *Gestalt* and are only weakened in that part that really was annihilated. The consequence of this difference is that tactics is only able to sustain a continuous use of forces and strategy only a simultaneous one.<sup>929</sup>

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<sup>927</sup> This view of primordial law of war resembles the letter to Gneisenau 15 March 1818.

<sup>928</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Vereinigung der Kräfte in der Zeit', *Vom Kriege* 3:12, 389-96

<sup>929</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Vereinigung der Kräfte in der Zeit', *Vom Kriege* 3:12, 389-96, cf. 390-91. 'Diese Gefahr reicht aber nur soweit, als die *Unordnung, der Zustand der Auflösung und Schwächung* reicht, mit einem Wort, die Krise, welche jedes Gefecht *auch beim Sieger* mit sich bringt. In dem Bereich dieses geschwächten Zustandes ist die Erscheinung einer verhältnismäßigen frischen Anzahl Truppen entscheidend. Wo aber diese auflösende Wirkung des Sieges aufhört, und also nur die moralische Überlegenheit bleibt, die jeder Sieg gibt, da ist die frische Kraft nicht mehr imstande, das Verlorene gutzumachen, da wird sie mit fortgerissen. Ein geschlagenes Heer kann Tages darauf nicht mehr durch eine starke Reserve zum Sieg zurückgeführt werden. *Hier befinden wir uns an der Quelle eines höchst wesentlichen Unterschiedes zwischen Taktik und Strategie.* Es liegen nämlich die taktischen Erfolge, die Erfolge *innerhalb* des Gefechts und vor seinem Schluß, *größtenteils noch in dem Bereich jener Auflösung und Schwächung*;

He had a pejorative view of strategic reserves since Prussia had failed to commit all her forces in the battles of Jena and Auerstedt in 1806. He criticized older viewpoints in the literature of the wise to keep strategic reserves; to him it was absurd to keep forces unemployed in a main decision. After his contradiction of literature and experience had been clarified Clausewitz concluded that he hoped Prussian military thought would not be blamed for having 'fought windmills'.<sup>930</sup> The standpoint on the strategic primacy of joining forces in time was, as mentioned above, also described to Gneisenau in March 1818 in relation to the raising of a joint *Bundesheer* in the German States.<sup>931</sup>

To say something clever about the economy of force, he began to clarify that the line of argument put forward in his exposition had of course a certain *Spielraum*, latitude, as did all practical arts of life. Here the economy of force was simply the *Grundsatz* to use all forces available simultaneously in strategy.<sup>932</sup> The more sophisticated treatment distilled later in the study of Friedrich's strategy in 1820-1822 and elaborated in the first chapter of Book 3, related to the balance of purpose and means, was not present at this time.<sup>933</sup>

The next chapter concluded that the geometrical principle was not decisive in strategy as in the art of fortification, and far less important than in tactics. The reason was simply the much larger frame of time and space in strategy. Far more important was actual success on one spot, the impact and number of victorious combats, which could be utilized by strategy to pursue a campaign. Clausewitz argued that actual tactical success was more important than the strategic framing and context in which they appeared. The word 'great lineaments' (*großen Lineamente*) was used for coherence, which was the same term he later used to describe the theoretical problem of 1826-1827.<sup>934</sup> That problem was solved by integrating *Politik* theoretically.

The printed Book 3 included a slightly modified version of the text on progress and stagnation in the warlike act.<sup>935</sup> This was followed by a brief outline of the contemporary character of war, which argued that present conditions must have a

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die strategischen aber, d. h. der Erfolg des Totalgefechts, der fertige Sieg, groß oder klein, wie er auch sei, *liegt schon außerhalb dieses Bereichs*. Erst wenn die Erfolge der Teilgefechte sich zu einem selbständigen Ganzen verbunden haben, tritt der strategische Erfolg ein, dann hört aber der Zustand der Krise auf, die Kräfte gewinnen ihre ursprüngliche Gestalt wieder und sind nur um den Teil geschwächt, der wirklich vernichtet worden ist. Die Folge dieses Unterschiedes ist, daß die Taktik eines nachhaltigen Gebrauchs der Kräfte fähig ist und die Strategie nur eines gleichzeitigen.'

<sup>930</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Stragische Reserve', *Vom Kriege* 3:13, 397-400. This chapter refers to the battle of Kulm 1813, which Clausewitz visited in the summer of 1821.

<sup>931</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Koblenz 15 March 1818, *Schriften* (1990), 325-32, cf. 330 '...ein successiver Gebrauch der Kräfte in der Strategie scheint gegen die Natur des Krieges'

<sup>932</sup> Clausewitz [1817-20], *Ökonomie der Kräfte*, *Vom Kriege* 3:14, 401-2

<sup>933</sup> This text seems to have been written before the study of Friedrich's strategy. The opening chapter 'Strategie' (3:1) appears to have been written later as it outlined a more sophisticated view of the economy of force.

<sup>934</sup> Clausewitz [1823-24], 'Geometrisches Element', *Vom Kriege* 3:15, 403-5

<sup>935</sup> Clausewitz [1817-24], 'Über den Stillstand im Kriegerischen Akt', *Vom Kriege* 3:16, 406-11

great influence on every making of strategy. Bonaparte had managed to annihilate states of first rank in one blow by fortune and boldness. The Spaniards had however proven the great potential of persistent fighting (*anhaltende Kampf*), based on public arming and means of insurrections, despite their weakness and porosity in single aspects.

The campaign of 1812 had proved first, that a large country was not suitable to conquer, which was already known; secondly, the chance of success was not always proportional to the losses in battles, capitals and provinces, as earlier diplomatic precepts had projected. Instead one was strongest in the middle of one's territory when the opponent's offensive power (*Offensivkraft*) was exhausted, which was similar to his arguments in 1812. Prussia had proved that a joint national effort in a sudden switch from defensive to offensive, driven by the fear of sheer survival and ambition, was an enormous product of power.

Now that all governments had learned the enormous power of public wars, one could not expect this knowledge to disappear and not be used in the future, and this simply motivated and justified Clausewitz's way of theorizing strategy.

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The chapter has explained Clausewitz's very pragmatic view of theory. Theory should be realistic in explanations and expectations, thus be modest in scope. The first conception of theory was surveyed along with his criticism of old theory. The first *Grundvorstellung* was explained as theoretical model of warlike element derived from the *Urbestimmung*. The final part addressed the outline of the *Geist* of modern strategy, which was a clarification of the warlike element.

The chapter noted Clausewitz's pragmatic view of the close relation of *Kriegskunst* and *Regierungskunst*. It was stressed to further clarify that *Politik* in terms statecraft was not discovered or introduced in 1827 as some suggest. On the contrary, strategy was basically about the realistic balance of political purpose and military means. This means that limited ambition, i.e. limited aim, was always present in Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy. He was however poor to spell this out in plain language to the common reader.

The reason is that Clausewitz basically theorized the warlike element for strategic thought, as he told us several times in this chapter. His intention was to elaborate the political side of the conduct of war in the final book on the war plan. Note that his definition of strategy in the beginning of Book 3, cited above, explains his scope of theory quite clearly: 'Strategy is the use of combats for the purpose of war...Thus, theory will follow strategy in this outline [cf. Small Volume], or more precisely, it [theory] will illuminate the things *per se* and their mutual relations, and bring out the little that prove itself as *Grundsatz* or rule.'<sup>936</sup>

It is also obvious that he perceived future war as the last one, although he acknowledged it was impossible to forecast in any detail. This concerned view of the future motivated his way of theorizing the warlike element for strategic thought.

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<sup>936</sup> Clausewitz, [1823-24], 'Strategie', Vom Kriege 3:1, 345-50, cf.345-46.

## 10. THE COMPOSITION OF COMBAT

### SEEKING INNER TRUTH BEHIND ART AND APPEARANCE

The main battle [*die Hauptschlacht*] is the bloodiest way of solution; but it is by no means mutual murder and the effect is more the killing of enemy courage than the enemy warrior..., though its price is always blood and its character is slaughter as the name [*Schlacht*] indicates; the human being inside the commander shudders because of this... So governments and commanders in all times have tried to find a way around the decisive battle, to accomplish their aim without the same, or drop it unnoticed. Historians and theorists have tried hard to find in these campaigns and wars any other way not just the equivalent of a missed decision by battle, instead a higher art [*Kriegskunst*]. In this way we have been close to considering main battle in the economy of war as an evil become necessary in consequence of mistakes, as a sick manifestation to which a well-managed, prudent war must never lead; the only commanders who deserved laurels would be those who had understood how to conduct war without bloodshed, and the theory of war, a true pundit service, would have decided completely on its own to teach this [cf. the effect of conventions, neglecting enmity - the warlike element]. [So]...We would not like to hear about commanders that [say they] can be victorious without bloodshed. If bloody battle is a horrible spectacle, this should only be a cause to ponder war more thoroughly; but one should not dull the sword one uses out of humanity until someone comes back with a sharp one, and hews our arms from our body.<sup>937</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], '[Die Hauptschlacht] Fortsetzung – Der Gebrauch der Schlacht', *Vom Kriege* 4:11, 467-73, cf. 469-70. 'Die Hauptschlacht ist der blutigste Weg der Lösung; zwar ist sie kein bloßes gegenseitiges Morden und ihre Wirkung mehr ein Totschlagen des feindlichen Mutes als der feindlichen Krieger..., allein immer ist Blut ihr Preis und Hinschlachten ihr Charakter wie ihr Name; davor schaudert der Mensch im Feldherrn zurück...So haben denn Regierungen und Feldherren zu allen Zeiten stets Wege um die entscheidende Schlacht herum gesucht, um entweder ihr Ziel ohne dieselbe zu erreichen, oder es unvermerkt fallen zu lassen. Die Geschichts- und Theorienschreiber haben sich dann abgemüht, in diesen Feldzügen und Kriegen in irgendeinem anderen Wege nicht bloß das äquivalent der versäumten Schlachtentscheidung zu finden, sondern selbst eine höhere Kunst. Auf diese Weise sind wir in unserer Zeit nahe daran gewesen, in der Ökonomie des Krieges die Hauptschlacht wie ein



This chapter elucidates the development of the concept of combat in Book 4 and the concept of fighting forces in Book 5, when the larger framework of *Vom Kriege* was apparently in place. As the quotation illustrates, Clausewitz objected in a conceptual sense to avoiding and neglecting the warlike element and the fundamental role of combat, which he saw as the constitutive element of war. He wished to remind everybody of this unpleasant truth, which recent history proved. These sets of texts relate to the study of the campaign of 1812 in Russia among others. This was also a time when his health deteriorated, forcing him to stay indoors for months, obviously however time used for writing.

The present chapter analyses first, how Clausewitz systematized combat to illuminate the impact sphere of victory. This means the coercive power that could be strategically utilized to further the warlike aim and ultimately the final political purpose. The concept of combat was the focal point in Clausewitz's theoretical system of the warlike element. Secondly, the concept of fighting forces is analysed. Clausewitz had not divided war into defence and attack up to this point of analysis. The chapter ends with an exposition of Clausewitz's life and poor health at this time. In addition his use of historical studies of strategy is analysed.

#### SYSTEMATIZING COMBAT TO CLARIFY THE SPHERE OF VICTORY

The different views of combat had caught Clausewitz's initial interest when he read Chambray's book on infantry.<sup>938</sup> The book on the concept of combat (*das Gefecht*) was presumably written between 1824 and 1825. Some parts can be connected to the study of the Russian campaign written at the earliest in 1824. The chapters were in general somewhat longer than in earlier texts, indicating that Clausewitz had fully adopted the idea of a larger work. The purpose was to elaborate the use of combat from the 'effective element of war', hence the warlike element, outlined in Book 3 to explain how to grasp the peculiar *Gestalt* of every combat. Combat was a tactical construction, but in its simple and complex effects connected to the final purpose of the whole war. Combats *per se* were quite similar, but their use and their result brought individuality in a larger perspective.<sup>939</sup>

Combat was the centre of gravity and epicentre of Clausewitz's entire system of the warlike element (*Mittel- und Schwerpunkt des ganzen Systems*). It is obvious he wanted to re-establish the notion of combat as conceptual focal point for strategic thought. The effect of a decision in a large battle depended on its context. It was not

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durch Fehler notwendig gewordenes Übel anzusehen, wie eine krankhafte Äußerung, zu der ein ordentlicher, vorsichtiger Krieg niemals führen müßte; nur diejenigen Feldherren sollten Lorbeeren verdienen, die es verstanden, den Krieg ohne Blutvergießen zu führen, und die Theorie des Krieges, ein wahrhafter Brahminendienst, sollte ganz eigens dazu bestimmt sein, dies zu lehren...Wir mögen nichts hören von Feldherren, die ohne Menschenblut siegen. Wenn das blutige Schlachten ein schreckliches Schauspiel ist, so soll das nur eine Veranlassung sein, die Kriege mehr zu würdigen, aber nicht die Schwerter, die man führt, nach und nach aus Menschlichkeit stumpfer zu machen, bis einmal wieder einer dazwischen kommt mit einem scharfen, der uns die Arme beim Leibe weghaut.'

<sup>938</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 11 April 1824, *Schriften* (1990), 444-46.

<sup>939</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Übersicht', *Vom Kriege* 4:1, 419

the destruction *per se* that was strategically important, but how this effect linked up in context. The intensity and reach of victory were of course individual. The more a commander committed himself to the spirit of war, the more he strove for a decision to overthrow the enemy and the more was put in the balance scale for the first battle. His explanation clearly reflected the message of *Urbestimmung*: 'Bonaparte hardly ever undertook any of his wars without the intention of overthrowing his enemy already in the first battle; in smaller circumstances and limited crises Friedrich the Great thought like this as well, when he in the forefront sought to make some space against the Russians or the Reich's army with a small army at his back.'<sup>940</sup>

Clausewitz's emphasis on battle and victory as the means for strategy was not odd at all. For example, at this time the Austrian officer Carl von Clam-Martinic lectured on the *Kriegskunst* as: 'War is the exercise of hostile conditions by two or more states through their armies. – The purpose is to obtain an advantageous peace. – One achieves this purpose through decisive victories.'<sup>941</sup> Clausewitz continued by sketching a *Vorstellung* of modern battle to set a general tone, both to offensive and defensive battle. This text can be seen as a continuation of the chapter on the character of contemporary war in Book 3. Clausewitz pointed to popular passion as the motor of modern combat. He removed all technical details to depict the fundamental difference between the combat and its subsequent wider effects; a distinction not bound in time or to circumstances.<sup>942</sup>

The concept of combat between the warlike element and its final political purpose of war was elaborated. If the state and its fighting forces were thought of as a unity the whole war could be thought of as one large combat, which was similar among less civilized people.<sup>943</sup> The final political purpose was, however, not always a simple one, which made war aims into a compound of smaller and larger ones. This further exemplifies how the warlike act was elaborated in relation to *Politik* prior to 1827. Clausewitz used the concept of annihilation as the general tactical purpose of combat, which however was pure means in strategy. His target was once more older theory, seeking to correct expectations which had dismissed combat *per se* in favour of artistic combinations remote from actual fighting.<sup>944</sup>

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<sup>940</sup> Clausewitz [1824-24], '[Die Hauptschlacht] Fortsetzung – Der Gebrauch der Schlacht', *Vom Kriege* 4:11, 467-73, cf. 411. 'Bonaparte ist wohl kaum in einem seiner Kriege ohne den Gedanken ausgezogen, seinen Gegner gleich in der ersten Schlacht niederzuschlagen; und Friedrich der Große, in kleineren Verhältnissen und beschränkteren Krisen, dachte ebenso, wenn er an der Spitze eines kleinen Heeres sich im Rücken gegen die Russen oder die Reichsarmee Luft machen wollte.'

<sup>941</sup> Carl v. Clam-Martinic, *Vorlesungen aus dem Gebiete der Kriegskunst: Ein Handbuch für Officiere* (Wien: Strauß, 1823), 6. 'Der Krieg ist die Ausübung des feindseligen Verhältnisses zweier oder mehrerer Staaten durch ihre Armeen. – Sein Zweck ist die Erämpfung eines vorteilhaften Friedens.- Diesen Zweck erricht man durch entscheidende Siege.'

<sup>942</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Charakter der Heutigen Schlacht', *Vom Kriege* 4:2, 420-21

<sup>943</sup> This particular framing underpinned the forming of later operational thinking and operational art, viewing war as a gigantic combat in conceptual sense.

<sup>944</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Das Gefecht Überhaupt', *Vom Kriege* 4:3, 422-26

He continued to argue for the reciprocity of physical and moral forces. The difference in physical losses between victor and defeated was often very small. It was the loss of moral vigour that made the difference. The annihilation of enemy armed forces, or fighting power, was thus to be understood as a double decrease, not just in physical force but also in moral vigour. Clausewitz elaborated several aspects of the confluence of moral and physical forces. A good chance to achieve great moral impact was for the victor to utilize the moment when the defeated had lost equilibrium, so as to maximize the latter's losses before he regained order.

In theory every combat was a mutual annihilation physically as well as morally. But in the end it was difficult to exactly determine the value of a victory as a clear opposite to a defeat. Jena and Waterloo were true defeats but not Borodino. The line between victory and defeat was thus not clear. A victory could indeed also bring the *'umgekehrte Wirkung'*, opposite effect, an important observation hardly noticed in the literature.<sup>945</sup> Clausewitz had already in his twenties observed how Machiavelli outlined the different weights of victory.<sup>946</sup> According to the exposition the absolute *Gestalt* of combat was a smaller image or mime of the whole war. Consequently, the significance of real combats was related to the forms of defence and attack.<sup>947</sup>

The integration and relation of a combat to other fighting forces lent duration (*Dauer*) a significance of its own. Clausewitz regarded duration as a second, subordinate type of success. The victor could not decide fast enough, while the weaker could use duration for postponing the decision.<sup>948</sup> Clausewitz theorized major combat as a structure of minor combats and other events that together formed the outcome. This brought the outline to the problem of decision. Decision was not one single moment even if some events had more importance than others. Every combat had a point in time when one side had gained decision, which was very important for a commander to grasp.

Reinforcement after this point would either start a new combat or lead to disaster, risking a waste of reserves unable to turn the situation around. Clausewitz gave as an example *Fürst Hohenlohe's* reinforcement at the battle of Jena. This came too late and instead offered Bonaparte the opportunity to destroy two major forces successively: 'We ask consequently: what is the most common moment of decision, that is to say when a new, intact but not appropriate fighting force can no longer turn around a disadvantageous combat?'<sup>949</sup>

Clausewitz elaborated different aspects such as different purposes, the confluence of moral and physical forces, use of reserves etc. to clarify the relation of the *duration* of the combat and the *moment of decision*. Before the revolutionary wars, the

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<sup>945</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Fortsetzung [Das Gefecht Überhaupt]', *Vom Kriege* 4:4, 427-35

<sup>946</sup> Clausewitz [1804], 'Strategie', *Schriften* (1979), 3-45, cf. 9

<sup>947</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Über die Bedeutung des Gefechts', *Vom Kriege* 4:5, 436-38

<sup>948</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Dauer des Gefechts', *Vom Kriege* 4:6, 439-40

<sup>949</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Entscheidung des Gefechts', *Vom Kriege* 4:7, 441-48, cf. 442. 'Wir fragen also: welches ist gewöhnlich der Augenblick der Entscheidung, d. h. derjenige, wo eine neue, wohlverstanden nicht unverhältnismäßige Streitkraft ein nachteiliges Gefecht nicht mehr wenden kann?'

acceptance of both parties to join combat had been tradition, but this had not been the case in the ensuing thirty years.<sup>950</sup> This was an implicit criticism of Enlightenment military theory, which had downplayed the role of combat in the name of moral progress. Clausewitz made an ironic comment on *Erzherzog Karl's* account of the battle of Neresheim in August 1796, in which the Austrian commander had explained his attack on Moreau to make a retreat possible.<sup>951</sup>

The next matter to clarify about combat was the role of main battle (*Die Hauptschlacht*). Clausewitz was again polemical against older theory, which had projected the order of battle and other purely military-technical aspects as descriptions of success. The reason for Clausewitz's special theoretical affinity to main battle was instead the potential of great effects on the outcome. A main battle was a contest between main forces, large and small purposes perhaps intermingling, but it was not a simple attempt that one abandoned easily. It was fighting with great effort, which gave a very special tone to the conditions.

The main battle was intimately connected to the whole, to the roots of conflict. It encapsulated the essence, and temper, of war (*Wesen des Krieges*) as fighting. It was described as the true '*Schwerpunkt*' of the war: 'This has influence on the nature of its decision, on the effect of its achieved victory, and decides the value that it must attach to theory as means to an end.'<sup>952</sup> The effect of a victory was of course not clear-cut.

The loss of a main battle would however have greater moral effect on the defeated and ruin equilibrium, at least for a while. The first sign of a great loss would be '*das Zusammenschmelzen der Massen*', the melting away of the masses. Clausewitz characterized a state of mind similar to panic, which an army of good fighting mettle could handle better than a weaker. The type and amount of trophies also had a multiplying effect. An army in defeat was weakened in many ways; for example in trust in its commander. The effect of victory would however more rely on the victor's ability to use the new state of imbalance. The commander and his character were the chief reason if a great victory led to large effects. War uncovered human weakness, which also was the target for the able commander to utilize.<sup>953</sup> Here it seems he had Bonaparte in mind and perhaps also Gneisenau, who were at their best in the midst of danger.

To clarify the use of the battle Clausewitz returned to his concept of war, compare the *Urbestimmung* and the warlike element, which was constructed on the main principle of annihilating the enemy's fighting power. For Clausewitz, the main battle was 'war concentrated'; the *Schwerpunkt* of the whole war to achieve maximum effect in as few actions as possible. The more war was warlike the more the main battle would appear

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<sup>950</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Einverständnis beider Teile Zum Gefecht', *Vom Kriege* 4:8, 449-52.

<sup>951</sup> Erzherzog Karl, *Grundsätze der Strategie, erläutert durch die Darstellung des Feldzuges von 1796 in Deutschland* (Wien: 1814), 313 ff.

<sup>952</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Die Hauptschlacht', *Vom Kriege* 4:9, 453- 59, cf. 452. "Dies hat Einfluß auf die Art ihrer Entscheidung, auf die Wirkung des in ihr erhaltenen Sieges, und bestimmt den Wert, welchen ihr die Theorie als Mittel zum Zweck beilegen muß."

<sup>953</sup> Clausewitz [1824-25], '[Die Hauptschlacht] Fortsetzung – Wirkung des Sieges', *Vom Kriege* 4:10, 460-66

as the natural way forward, propelled by hatred as the epithet of public war. The main battle was indeed bloody but was not mutual murder; instead, it was the 'killing of enemy courage', as the opening quote to this chapter graphically argues.

Clausewitz returned to the purely military theorists. They had sought in the belief in moral progress a higher art outside battle and bloody decision. Their ideas were severely criticized for projecting war as an easy military picnic, less dangerous and less violent than the concept of war presupposed. It is important to recognize Clausewitz's theoretical point. It was wrong, dangerous and irresponsible to assume war was a nice concept and a walk in the park. The German and French military thinkers before the Great War took Clausewitz seriously on this point but forgot his outline of the reciprocal consequence.

The intensity of victory was elaborated from tactical aspects such as correlation of forces, tactical forms, weapons and terrain used; but also how the commander made battle a strategic means by providing a decisive character to make a moral impact. One strategic means was to use the victory to pursue the enemy (*Verfolgen*). The activity itself was tactical, as had appeared clearly during the Napoleonic Wars, and opened a new field of military energy. Older wars had relied on thinner premises and had been conducted under narrower horizons, which brought out conventional limitations. Only a few historical commanders had previously utilized their victories to pursue the enemy; exemplified by Karl XII, Marlborough, Euguen and Friedrich the Great. Pursuit was the second act of victory. The value of a victory was mostly determined by the energy with which the pursuit was conducted.<sup>954</sup>

The study of the Russian campaign included a casualty estimation of Bonaparte's *Zentrum* during the advance and withdrawal in 1812, which projected two conclusions not considered enough in the literature. First, the French army had arrived in Moscow too weak to complete its success. Secondly, the massive French casualties in the combats of Wiasma, Crasnoi and on the Beresina were caused by energetic pursuit, which incomparable result finally destroyed the French army.<sup>955</sup>

Clausewitz argued in *Vom Kriege* that Jena, Regensburg, Leipzig and Waterloo exemplified large main victories with great strategic effects due to successful pursuit. Borodino had on the other hand a smaller effect. Clausewitz referred to Chambray's account of the Russian expedition and also the critical account of Philippe Paul Comte de Ségur (1780-1873), first published in French 1824 and in German in 1825.<sup>956</sup> This

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<sup>954</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-25], 'Strategische Mittel, den Sieg zu Benutzen', *Vom Kriege* 4:12, 474-85

<sup>955</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-March 1825], 'Russ Feldz v. 1812. Beilage N.2. Uebersicht der Verluste welche das französische *Centrum* beim Vorgehen und auf dem Rückzug erlitten hat', *Schriften* (1990), 920-35

<sup>956</sup> Philippe Paul Comte de Ségur, *Historie de Napoleon et de la grande armée pendant l'année 1812*, 2 Vols (Paris: Baudouin, 1824); Ph. V. Ségur, *Geschichte Napoleons und der großen Armee in J. 1812*, A.d. Frz v. J.v. Theobald, 2 Vols (Stuttgart: Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1825)

indicates that Clausewitz wrote this text after the summer of 1824 but not later than 1826.<sup>957</sup>

Every lost battle was a weakening and dissolving principle, according to Clausewitz. A successful withdrawal could, however, restore equilibrium if the victor failed to utilize the situation and expand the impact sphere of victory.<sup>958</sup> Clausewitz's view of utilizing victory to make it a strategic means was clearly influenced by his understanding of Bonaparte's way of war, revealed for example in the final evaluation of the campaigning Russia:

The author is now allowed to say his meaning about Bonaparte's operation plan in this much discussed campaign. Bonaparte desired to conduct the war in Russia and conclude as he had conducted and concluded everywhere else: commence with decisive battles and use the advantage obtained for new decisive battles, and stake again every gain on one card until the bank was blown away. That was his way, and one has to say that the enormous success he had in this world had only this way to thank; this type of success was hardly thinkable by anyone else.<sup>959</sup>

It is here appropriate to raise a question about Gat's interpretation of Clausewitz's ideals and ideas once more. Clausewitz viewed Prussia and Germany as a minor power in comparison to France. His interest was to defend not to conquer. It was only Bonaparte that had been able to realize grand aggressive ambitions. However, it was Clausewitz's vivid clarification of combat and moral forces that foremost caught most military readers' interest before the First World War.

#### THE CONCEPT OF ARMED FORCES AND FIGHTING

The introduction to Book 5 on armed forces, *die Streitkräfte*, stated that this part would address terms and conditions necessary for the *Kampf*, fight, in a state of reciprocity.<sup>960</sup> One text referred to Chambray's work on the Russian campaign. This text was in close relation to the other texts of the set, which suggests that Book 5 as a whole was written between the summer of 1824 and 1826.<sup>961</sup> The texts in this set

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<sup>957</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-25], 'Strategische Mittel, den Sieg zu Benutzen', *Vom Kriege* 4:12, 474-85, cf. 479-80

<sup>958</sup> Clausewitz [1824-24], 'Rückzug nach Verlorener Schlacht', *Vom Kriege* 4:13, 486-88

<sup>959</sup> Clausewitz [spring 1824 to February 1825], '3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs', *Schriften* (1990), 914. 'Jetzt sei es dem Verfasser noch erlaubt seine Meinung über den *Operations-Plan Bonapartes* in diesem viel besprochenen Feldzug zu sagen. Bonaparte wollte den Krieg in Rußland führen und endigen wie er ihn überall geführt und geendigt hatte. Mit entscheidenden Schlägen anzufangen und die dadurch erhaltenen Vortheile zu neuen entscheidenden Schlägen zu zu benutzen, so der Gewinn immer wieder auf eine Karte zu setzen bis die Bank gesprengt sey, das war seine Art, und man muß sagen daß er dem ungeheurn Erfolg welchen er in der Welt gehabt hat, nur dieser Art verdankt; daß dieser Erfolg bei einer anderen kaum denkbar war.'

<sup>960</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Übersicht', *Vom Kriege* 5:1, 499

<sup>961</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-26], 'Fortsetzung [Lager]', *Vom Kriege* 5:12, 562-65

resemble Book 4 in style, with a somewhat easier presentation than earlier sets. The interrelated concepts theatre of war, army and campaign for strategy were first broadly defined.<sup>962</sup>

He returned to the most important *Grundsatz* of modern strategy introduced in Book 3, the absolute necessity to achieve numerical superiority if decision was sought. This basic standpoint was elaborated in more detail by investigating how to think about the correlation of forces. One could not be strong enough in entering a decision, especially at a time when the great powers had very equal proficiency. The courage and fighting spirit of an army would of course be a force multiplier every time; but the imbalance present after the French revolution was no longer valid. After the Revolution, France had been able to muster a superior military mobility thanks to the new military constitution in combination with a new tactical system. This had given the French a considerable moral preponderance on the battlefield, while Prussia had been busy chasing complex ideas of a higher hidden *Kriegskunst*.

The contemporary relevance of this *Grundsatz* was strengthened by the fact that most countries after the Napoleonic Wars were rather similar in fighting manners, training, military-intellectual characteristics and armament. Moreover, any form of asymmetry tended to be quickly corrected by imitation. This view was present in the study of the 1815 campaign, also written at this time.<sup>963</sup> The more equal the European armies became, the more would correlation of forces increase in importance.

Clausewitz returned to Borodino in 1812, the site of a battle of almost perfect equilibrium in numbers. He described this battle as a '*ruhiges Abmessen der Kräfte*', a calm gauge of the forces. This phenomenon indicated a tone and in fact characterized every battle. Bonaparte had almost always entered his victorious main battles with superior, or at least very similar, numbers. He succumbed at Leipzig, Brienne, Laon and Waterloo where this was not the case. The absolute strength of armed forces was given to strategy, since the size of armies was a financial question and consequently a choice of policy.

The *Grundsatz* of superiority of numbers did not of course rule out the option to wage war with minor forces. War was not always a free political choice and had to be fought according to the prevailing correlation of strength. It would have been wonderful if war could have been fought with 'reasonable strength', but the relation of forces was not subject to finite borders. Clausewitz returned to the balance of means and purpose, which clearly illustrated that he had not abandoned the more limited way of conducting war in practice. He developed a framework to guide how to think about the scope of purpose according to available strength. Here, fighting energy had a premier role:

The weaker the force is, the smaller the purpose must be; again, the weaker the force is, the shorter the duration. Of the two sides the weaker has room for evasive action, if we may express it so. What changes the extent of force now brings about in the conduct of the war, will we only

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<sup>962</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], '*Armee, Kriegstheater, Feldzug*', *Vom Kriege* 5:2, 499

<sup>963</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], '*Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815*', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118

be able to say gradually as events occur; here it is enough to have stated the general point of view; to round things off we just add one thing. The more a party lacking forces is dragged into an unequal fight, the greater must the inner *Spannung* [tension] generated by the danger provide the energy be. Where the opposite is the case, where heroic despair turns into discouragement, there ends the *Kriegskunst* indeed. If a measure of moderation in the prescribed aim is combined with this energy of force, then a game of shining battles and cautious restraint arises, which we must admire in the wars of Friedrich the Great.<sup>964</sup>

The less the moderation and less caution, the more the forces would be in a state of tension and filled with energy. If no limitations were visible before the loss, no sparing use of forces could accomplish the aim. The tension present in the army would then melt away in a fierce battle of despair. A commander so seduced had hardly any help to expect, which echoed Prussia's situation in 1806. The only thing to do in such a desperate situation was to trust to moral superiority, which despair provided for any brave souls.

The consequence for the brave commander would be that: '...he will see the highest bravery as the highest wisdom...' because the brave would find the right to a future resurrection (*Aufstehung*) in an honourable downfall (*Untergang*).<sup>965</sup> This view appeared to reflect the way Clausewitz had viewed the overthrow of Prussia in 1806-1807 and its later national rebirth in 1813-1815. His presentation of the existential situation had indeed a religious undertone. The conclusion – to see war as a continuation of *Politik* in a broader sense – was not so far away!

The text on the correlation of arms outlined a historical overview of infantry, artillery and cavalry. Like the infantryman he was, Clausewitz argued for the strength of infantry as the main weapon of the army. This was also a counterargument to the French view of cavalry as the main weapon of the army, but Clausewitz stressed the principle of combined arms, which he continued to elaborate in the next chapter on the order of battle. Here he discussed, for example, the span of control and

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<sup>964</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Machtverhältnis', *Vom Kriege* 5:3, 503-6, cf. 505 'Je schwächer die Kraft, um so kleiner müssen die Zwecke sein; ferner: je schwächer die Kraft, um so kürzer die Dauer. Nach diesen beiden Seiten hin hat also die Schwäche Raum auszuweichen, wenn wir uns so ausdrücken dürfen. Welche Veränderungen nun das Maß der Kraft in der Kriegführung hervorbringt, werden wir nur nach und nach sagen können, wie die Dinge vorkommen; hier ist es genug, den allgemeinen Gesichtspunkt angegeben zu haben; um denselben aber zu vervollständigen, wollen wir nur noch das eine hinzufügen. Je mehr dem in einen ungleichen Kampf Hineingezogenen der Umfang der Kräfte fehlt, um so größer muß, von der Gefahr gedrängt, die innere Spannung, die Energie derselben werden. Wo das Entgegengesetzte stattfindet, wo statt einer heldenmütigen Verzweiflung eine mutlose eintritt, da hört freilich alle *Kriegskunst* auf. Verbindet sich mit jener Energie der Kräfte eine weise Mäßigung in den vorgesetzten Zwecken, so entsteht jenes Spiel von glänzenden Schlägen und vorsichtiger Zurückhaltung, welches wir in Friedrichs des Großen Kriegen bewundern müssen.'

<sup>965</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Machtverhältnis', *Vom Kriege* 5:3, 503-6, cf. 506. "...er wird die höchste Kühnheit als die höchste Weisheit betrachten..."



appropriate size of all arms formations.<sup>966</sup> He turned to the general assembly of an army to discuss basic aspects such as the supply and sheltering of a main force.<sup>967</sup>

Longer parts of related chapters addressed conceptual components surrounding major combat, which certainly projected the idea of mobile war. The first component was the use of avant-garde and forward posts (*Vorposten*) of different sizes, which was part of tactics as well as strategy. Friedrich was known to be ready for battle almost instantly and had actually ordered his army into battle with a few instructions. His army had usually been protected by a very simple system of forward posts. During the advance to contact, the main force had been protected by an avant-garde of about 1000 horse, which took the first encounter. Bonaparte had always used strong avant-gardes. His forces had moved more separated due to tactical development and their much larger size, sometimes five times that of Friedrich's army. The effects of forward-operating corps, such as providing security for the army and gaining time, were put in a larger perspective.<sup>968</sup>

The wars after the revolution had been more mobile. One reason was that soldiers simply endured more due to higher motivation. Camps were in addition no longer a key aspect of the *Kriegskunst* as they had been previously.<sup>969</sup> Soldiers now slept wherever possible, even in the open if necessary. The old complex supply systems were also reduced and replaced by the simple system of requisitioning. Soldiers now simply lived on the region where the operation was taking place.<sup>970</sup>

Clausewitz observed that movement had appeared as a new principle in fighting during Friedrich's wars in the mid-eighteenth century, which had induced the perception of victory as a product of unexpected movement. Note the similarity to Liddell Hart's ideas in the 1920-1930s. The post-revolutionary wars had brought into being a new general *Grundsatz*, that fighting had to be expected all the time. The 'organic order of battle' had been the answer to maintaining high readiness for combat during the move. This signified integrated larger formations as smaller models of the whole army.<sup>971</sup> The real starting point for this more hostile approach to war had been the Italian campaign of 1796, which made Bonaparte a recognized first-rate commander who showed a new standard of mobile campaigning.

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<sup>966</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Waffenverhältnis', *Vom Kriege* 5:4, 507-17; 'Schlachtordnung des Heeres', *Vom Kriege* 5:5, 518-24

<sup>967</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Allgemeine Aufstellung des Heeres', *Vom Kriege* 5:6, 525-31.

<sup>968</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Avantgarde und Vorposten', *Vom Kriege* 5:7, 532-40; 'Wirkungsart Vorgesobener Korps', *Vom Kriege* 5:8, 541-46

<sup>969</sup> Compare for example Friedrich II, *Grundsätze der Lager-Kunst und Tactic* (French 1770/German 1771); [Guillaume] Le Blond, *Versuch über die Lagerkunst oder anleitung ein Feldlager anzumessen und anzustecken*, Translated from French by Johann Moritz & Grafen von Brühl (Johann Heinrich Decker, 1767); Ludwig Müllers *nachgelassene militärische Schriften*, Vol 1/? 'Die Lagerkunst' (Berlin: Frölichschen Buchhandlung, 1807)

<sup>970</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Lager', *Vom Kriege* 5:9, 547-49; 'Quartiere', *Vom Kriege* 5:13, 566-72; 'Der Unterhalt', *Vom Kriege* 5:14, 573-90

<sup>971</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], 'Märsche', *Vom Kriege* 5:10, 550-57

Clausewitz continued to elaborate mobility from the aspects of operational base, lines of communication, region and land. Bulow's *Kriegssystem* was gone over once more to point to the lack of sense in thinking of success as a closed system of geometrical magnitude, from a clever combination of *Operationsbasis*, *Operationswinkel* and *Operationsobjekt*. One had of course to think about the strength and weakness of the operational basis, but such aspects could never be abstracted to general rules of conduct.

The importance of basis increased with the size of force employed. Clausewitz compared the size of a tree and the ground, where the importance of latter increased with the height of the tree. The 1812 campaign was used as a practical example. After the battle of Smolensk the Russians pondered a push towards Kaluga to cut off the French advance towards Moscow. However that type of large movement was only possible if long foreseen. The importance of basis varied with the enterprise, but it was hardly decisive in the end.<sup>972</sup>

Lines of communication were the army's back, life channel, as well as lines of retreat. Operations in friendly areas were projected as easier than in hostile territory. This was part of Clausewitz's basic conviction that defensive war was the strongest form. In consequence he was sceptical of the large flank enterprises popularized in the literature. The capture of a good army (*das Einfangen*) was much more difficult to achieve than a breakthrough (*das Durchschlagen*).

The means to shorten and secure extended lines of communications was actually very few. The few examples were decent treatment of inhabitants, conquering forward fortified positions, mustering a good police force, a strict regime and improvement of army roads. Clausewitz argued that the largest roads via the wealthiest cities in the most cultivated provinces provided the best lines of communication.<sup>973</sup> Here he just followed Bonaparte. Formerly, smaller roads and less urban areas had often been used for military enterprises. The impact of terrain on the conduct of war increased with the size of forces, in Clausewitz's opinion. This was in a way opposite to how we think today. Terrain intermingled with duration in action. In concrete terms the influence terrain exerted as cover for fire was also an obstacle to overview and approach. The joining and division of forces was examined as a key problem with different implications for command.<sup>974</sup>

Clausewitz ended the book on armed forces by criticising the popular buzzword '*Überhöhen*', i.e. command of the heights and similarly 'dominating positions', 'key-positions' and 'strategic manoeuvring'. While sceptical of such theoretical pet concepts *per se*, he also elaborated some aspects of their utility. However, in the end it was stressed that the only theoretical sound core of war for thinking strategy properly was victorious combat. Note that he insisted to follow the logic of the warlike element.<sup>975</sup>

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<sup>972</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], '*Operationsbasis*', *Vom Kriege* 5:15, 591-96

<sup>973</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], '*Verbindungslinien*', *Vom Kriege* 5:16, 597-601

<sup>974</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], '*Gegend und Boden*', *Vom Kriege* 5:17, 602-06

<sup>975</sup> Clausewitz [1824-26], '*Überhöhen*', *Vom Kriege* 5:18, 607-10, cf. 610

It is here important to observe that Clausewitz had not yet divided the concept of war into the two forms of defence and attack. He had theorized and elaborated strategy and the warlike element in general up to now. It was in the outline of Book 6 that he ran into trouble when theorising the conduct of war more deeply into the different forms of war.

#### SEARCHER IN POOR HEALTH

Clausewitz's correspondence during the 1820s was very much about his and others' problems of health. He had suffered from gout from at least as early as 1808, which had caused him great pain during the war and later. He took opium to alleviate the pain in 1814-1815 to the extent that Marie was told after Waterloo that he needed the drug to sleep.<sup>976</sup> To what extent he continued with opium is not known. Clausewitz and Marie started already in Koblenz to spend their holidays in spa towns such as Aachen (1814-1815), Schwalbach and Wiesbaden (1817), and Ems (1818). Taking the waters from healthy wells, dieting and taking bath cures were very popular at the time among the upper classes.

After moving to Berlin other diseases became more troublesome to him. Elise von Bernstorff noted that Clausewitz suffered from a stroke-like attack (*schlagartigen Zufall*) that temporarily paralyzed his right arm, on 3 June 1822, Marie's birthday.<sup>977</sup> He suffered a relapse of fever in July 1824 so severe they could not make the annual trip to Gneisenau in Silesia and he had to spend a month in his room.<sup>978</sup> Poor health continued at least until late October 1824, with intermittent fever and a more-or-less permanent sore throat (*Stehende Halsentzündungen*). He knew that many older people suffered from this illness.

Clausewitz dared not expose himself to the cold night air and bad weather. The old problem of haemorrhoids had also returned. At the end of October he felt a new attack (*Paroxismus*) coming on and tried baths, with no positive result.<sup>979</sup> Clausewitz's fever in the autumn of 1824 seems to have been *Wechselfieber*, a form of malaria.<sup>980</sup> The confinement caused by this periodic illness was used for writing, probably the final study of the campaign in Russia and perhaps Book 4.

Clausewitz seems to have become at least temporarily better during the winter and spring of 1825. Elise von Bernstorff described in her notes a happy outing with the Clausewitzes to the royal garden at Schönhausen in May 1825.<sup>981</sup> Gneisenau was

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<sup>976</sup> Clausewitz to Marie, Dammartin at Paris 29 June 1815, *Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen*, 382-84

<sup>977</sup> Elise v. Bernstoff note in Bernstoff, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit*, Vol 1/2, 326; 5Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 323

<sup>978</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 16 July 1824; Berlin 28 July, *Schriften* (1990), 446-50

<sup>979</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 9 September; 1 October; 25 October 1824, *Schriften* (1990), 455, 460, 467

<sup>980</sup> See 'Wechselfieber', *Brockhaus Bilder-Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol 4, (Leipzig: 1841), 675-76. [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000875899> accessed on 29 December 2011. Malaria was also stated in Cammerer, *Clausewitz*, 25

<sup>981</sup> Elise v. Bernstoff note from 9 May 1825 in Bernstoff, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit*, Vol 2/2, 45

promoted *General-Feldmarschall der Armee* on the anniversary of Waterloo, which was a clear sign of political rehabilitation. Friedrich Wilhelm also expressed a clear wish for Gneisenau's future service when Prussia so needed. The notification was immediately passed on to Clausewitz, who was very happy for his friend after many years of persecution.<sup>982</sup>

Marie and Clausewitz travelled a couple of weeks later to Marienbad in the western region of today's Czech Republic. The spa had at the time been rebuilt and developed to make better curative use of the carbon dioxide springs. On the journey from Berlin to Marienbad Clausewitz took notes on how to defend this area of Germany. He also made some historical notes on the battlefields of Jena and Auerstedt. Whether these notes were based on his longer study or were used for later revisions cannot be determined. In his opinion the best way to defend Sachsen and northern Germany from this direction was to make a '*Aufstellung an der Elster*', i.e. defensive line along the river Elster in combination with the employment of *Landwehr* and *Partheigänger* (light forces) in the Thüringer Woods.<sup>983</sup>

They stayed four weeks in Marienbad but his sore throat pain and gout remained intractable. In that sense the long cure was a waste of time and money, which bothered his economical mind. They left Marienbad to visit Gneisenau in Silesia with short stops in Karlsbad and Prague.<sup>984</sup> Clausewitz continued to make notes. In Prague they visited the battlefield at Mount Žižka, where Friedrich the Great had defeated the Austrians in May 1757.<sup>985</sup> Clausewitz's health deteriorated at Erdmannsdorff to the extent that he could not swallow. Gneisenau was told in early October of a tiny improvement, but also about Clausewitz's decision to stay indoors and speak as little as possible for a month. He had now severe problems to speak, but hoped to be recovered by November 1825.<sup>986</sup> He was on a strict diet and took medicine prescribed by Gneisenau's doctor in Berlin, which he believed had a slow but positive effect.<sup>987</sup>

Most of his closer friends, such as Bernstorff and Gneisenau, were also frequently ill. The latter seems also to have been frequently depressed, but he had told Clausewitz that his spirit of life had returned during 1825.<sup>988</sup> At the *Kriegsschule* and in societies Clausewitz attended lectures and discussions in several fields of thought. He listened for example in March 1825 to Heinrich Steffens (1773-1845) professor of physics in

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<sup>982</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm to Gneisenau, Berlin 18 June 1825, 'Allerhöchste Kabinetsordre', Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 516; Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 21 June 1824, *Schriften* (1990), 472

<sup>983</sup> Clausewitz [Leipzig 9 July to Marienbad 15 July 1825], 'Bemerkungen auf der Reise nach Marienbad im Juli 1825', Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol2/2, 269-85 cf.284

<sup>984</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Marienbad 12 August 1825, *Schriften* (1990), 472-74

<sup>985</sup> Clausewitz [Marienbad 19 August to Prague 21 August 1825], 'Reise von Marienbad über Prag nach Landshut in Schlesien', Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*, Vol2/2, 285-88

<sup>986</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 9 October 1825, *Schriften* (1990), 474-80, cf. 475

<sup>987</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 25 October 1825, *Schriften* (1990), 480-82

<sup>988</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmannsdorf 1 November 1825, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 519

Breslau and a philosopher known as a brilliant lecturer.<sup>989</sup> He was an old friend of Schleiermacher's, acquainted with Schelling among other prominent thinkers, but gifted enough to develop their ideas further.

Steffens had at the turn of the century been struck by Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, which he had celebrated in his own texts. He personified the *Naturforscher* of his time, who combined a scientific interest in nature with philosophy and poetry; in that sense a true exponent of German Romanticism. Steffens was of Danish-Norwegian origin but worked most of his life in Prussia. He was a friend of Gneisenau and Scharnhorst. He had volunteered for the army after Friedrich Wilhelm's decision to go to war in early 1813, and had served in Blücher's headquarters during the War of Liberation along with Clausewitz.

When Alexander Humboldt was politically rehabilitated and took up lecturing in 1827, Clausewitz observed the similarity of his arguments to Steffens'.<sup>990</sup> Steffens argued that the principle of individualization was essential to the entire scheme of nature and intellectual life. As an organism became more developed, its individuality became more distinct. Steffens had many enemies due to his standpoints in politics and religion. It is obvious that Clausewitz also believed in the principle of individuality as the right way for strategic thought. Despite his theoretical reductions and simplifications, he believed that every case was unique. Tactical action in war may be similar but its larger impact and consequence were indeed different, and this was the realm of strategy. The rethinking of *Politik* 1827 reinforced this theoretical view further.

The physicist Paul Erman (1764-1851) worked as a professor at the *Kriegsschule* and at the University of Berlin. Paret has noted that Clausewitz attended his lectures during a whole year.<sup>991</sup> Erman was good at experimental scientific work, concerned mostly with the problems of electricity and magnetism. He was a member of the academy of sciences but did not achieve any lasting scientific discoveries. Erman became better known as a firm enemy of Romantic philosophy of nature and its influence on natural science. Clausewitz had noted Erman as one of the few healthy members of the *Kriegsschule* in 1819, due to his brilliance as a lecturer.<sup>992</sup>

Writing military theory was not harmless; for example the teacher of artillery at the *Kriegsschule* Major Karl von Decker (1784-1845) had a theoretical disagreement with one Captain Bachofen von Echt that ended in a duel in 1821.<sup>993</sup> The former shot his antagonist and had to spend three years in Spandau prison. Decker was a prolific military writer and publicist. He and Lilienstern had started the military paper *Militair-Wochenblatt* in 1816, which became the official organ of the general staff in 1824.

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<sup>989</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 25 March 1825, *Schriften* (1990), 470

<sup>990</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 24 November 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 534

<sup>991</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 310

<sup>992</sup> Clausewitz to Boyen, Berlin 21 March 1819, 'Denkschrift über die Reform der Kriegsschule zu Berlin', *Schriften* (1990), 1151-63; cf. 1152-53

<sup>993</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 26 November 1822, *Schriften* (1990), 416-18

Decker and Ludwig Blesson (1781-1861), an engineer officer and teacher at the *Kriegsschule*, published the military journal *Militärlitteratur-Zeitung* 1821-1844. This was probably the forum in which Clausewitz tried to publish his text on the *Landwehr* in 1821, but for some unknown reason this never took place. In April 1824 Decker and Blesson, together with their fellow teacher Major Friedrich von Ciriacy (1786-1829) started a broader military journal - *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges*.<sup>994</sup> Note that Clausewitz never took part in these journals in spite of being in the same institution, at least according to the state of research.

Also in 1824 Blesson translated Chambray's work on the Russian campaign, which Clausewitz used to revise his first treatment of this event, resulting in the more analytical text '*Uebersicht des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland*'.<sup>995</sup> The next year Decker published a work on the 1796-1797 Italian campaign, which had brought Napoleon recognition as a first-rate commander.<sup>996</sup> Clausewitz probably wrote an overview of this campaign in 1825-1826, which was reworked and expanded to a longer piece in 1828, published as the fourth volume of *Werke* in 1833.<sup>997</sup> This is clear from a letter to Gröben in 1829 cited below.

Clausewitz severely criticized the existing literature on the 1796 campaign. Jomini had in his lengthy account of the revolutionary wars addressed these campaigns in works published in Paris in 1821-1822.<sup>998</sup> The Swiss had according to Clausewitz done the best he could with the sources available to him. The exposition nevertheless lacked clarity. Jomini had failed analytically to expose the decisive events in context and coherence to lay bare the important causes of the outcome.

Napoleon's memoirs and essays were published between 1823 and 1825 in French and German at the same time, from notes taken by his companion on St Helena, Brigadier-general Charles-Tristan de Montholon.<sup>999</sup> Clausewitz had expected Bonaparte's writings to cast more light on the 1796 campaign. He simply ruled out Bonaparte's memoirs as biased with a fantasy image (*Traumbild*) of the past: 'The course of events

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<sup>994</sup> Ferdinand v. Meerheimb, 'Decker, Karl von', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 5 (1877), 8-10 [Onlineversion]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd100100236.html?anchor=adb> accessed 16 December 2011

<sup>995</sup> Clausewitz [Summer 1824-March 1825], '*Uebersicht des Feldzuges von 1812 in Rußland*', *Schriften* (1990), 763-806

<sup>996</sup> Karl v. Decker, *Feldzug in Italien in den Jahren 1796 und 1797* (Berlin und Posen: Mittler, 1825)

<sup>997</sup> This sequence of campaign studies can be followed in a letter to Gröben. See Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 2 January 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslernre*, 405-23, cf. 421.

<sup>998</sup> Jomini, *Historie critique et militaire des guerres de la revolution*. Nouvelle édition rédigée sur de nouveaux documents et augmentée d'un grand nombre de cartes et plans. 13 vols (Paris: Pochard, 1820-24), cf. Vol 8-10

<sup>999</sup> *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte Frankreichs unter Napoleon; von ihm zu St. Helena den Generalen dictiert, die seine Gefangenschaft getheilt haben, und herausgegeben nach der von ihm eigenhändig verbesserten Handschrift: Memoiren. Anmerkungen und vermischte Aufsätze, Niedergeschrieben von dem General Montholon*, 6 Vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1823-25). The Italian Campaign 1796-97 was addressed in vol 3 (1823); in addition was Jommi's analysis of this campaign in '*Traite des grandes operations militaires*' [Über den großen Krieg] commented by Napoleon in vol 1 (1823).

in previous time passes by the prison of St Helena only as a fantasy image, and what does one have to look for least in a dream if not precision.'<sup>1000</sup> Decker's account from 1825 was added as a footnote and judged as even more useless than all the others, deserving no further serious attention.<sup>1001</sup>

Clausewitz explained briefly to Gröben in January 1829 how he considered his historical accounts and how they were written. The letter tells us that Clausewitz's analytical ambition was primarily to solve the 'strategic questions' in his historical works.<sup>1002</sup> His mind-set was to disclose the 'inner truth' from the historical courses of events, and not to retell the 'total-impression' of their outer appearance as a normal historical account. His ambition was thus theoretical and didactic rather than historical and narrative.

I have during the past year [1828] worked up the campaign of 1796 in Italy as well as the one in 1797 up to the armistice of Leoben according to available published sources in my usual way known to you: this arose from a similar essay to the one on the 1815 campaign I had the honour to lecture the Crown Prince about last year [1828]...I have taken on the firm and unilateral direction in my historical accounts to exhaustively solve strategic questions. I never hesitate to seek out the underlying reasons and separate these from the causes of events [das pourquoi vom pourquoi aufzusuchen], because I do not care to write anything posing as good, because I look for the truth beyond doubt that can educate myself and others instead. This always brings me a lot of analysis and testing, which can be of interest only if one is seeking to develop inner truth and not the total impression of outer appearances.<sup>1003</sup>

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<sup>1000</sup> Clausewitz[1825-26+1828 not later than September], 'Feldzug von 1796 in Italien', *Werke* Vol4/10 (1833), cf. 3-4 'Die Erignisse der frühern Zeit gehen dem Gefangenen von St Helena nur wie ein Traumbild vorüber, und was darf man in einem Träume weniger suchen als die Präzision.'

<sup>1001</sup> This might indicate an earlier date of writing to as early as 1823, but most likely is however 1825.

<sup>1002</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 2 january 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.421

<sup>1003</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 2 january 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.421 'Ich habe im vorigen jahre [1828] den Feldzug von 1796 in Italien sowie den von 1797 bis zum Waffenstillstand von Leoben nach den vorhandenen gedrückten Quellen auf meine Ihnen bekannte Weise bearbeitet: es ist daraus ein ähnlicher Aufsatz entstanden wie der, welchen ich die Ehre gehabt habe, dem Kronprinzen über den Feldzug von 1815 im vorigen Jahr vorzulesen... Ich habe bei meinen historischen Darstellungen die ganz bestimmte und einseitige Richtung, die strategischen Fragen erschöpfend zu lösen. Ich scheue niemals, das pourquoi vom pourquoi aufzusuchen, weil es mir nicht darum zu tun ist, etwas zu schreiben, was sich gut ausnimmt, sondern weil ich für mich und andere unzeifelhafte Wahrheit und Belehrung suche. Das führt mich stets in eine Menge von Analysen und Prüfungen, die durchaus nur Interesse gewähren können, wenn man die Entfaltung der inneren Wahrheit sucht und nicht den Total-Eindruck der äußern Erscheinungen.'

Clausewitz's historical texts on different campaigns can thus be regarded as theoretical test beds for writing *Vom Kriege*. His belief in an inner truth can be compared to hermeneutics. It also resembled Kant's philosophical project of critique, which was about determining the limits of a faculty or a power through transcendental analysis.<sup>1004</sup> Clausewitz fine-tuned his approach and changed his mind-set slightly in the course of writing these overviews. Clausewitz mentioned to Gröben the similarities of work between the 1796 campaign and the 1815 campaign. The latter was also an overview entitled '*Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815*' with an added front page stating '*Feldzug von 1815*'.<sup>1005</sup>

The set of analytical overviews written in 1824-1826 included two more texts. The first was an overview of the 1814 campaign in France, which was rewritten later.<sup>1006</sup> The second was a short unfinished text on the 1813 campaign.<sup>1007</sup> It was more like fragmentary notes for clearing the mind than an overview. From the precept of keeping one's forces united as far as possible it elaborated the problem of developing a strategy when multiple directions and options were present. Note that the overviews made in this period focused on the rise and fall of Bonaparte to elucidate the 'inner truth of experience' for strategy.

By January 1826 Clausewitz had apparently recovered from the illness and sore throat he had suffered from during the autumn, when he had been completely unable to take part in social life.<sup>1008</sup> In April he complained only of minor headaches; otherwise he felt fairly well and was able to walk outdoors.<sup>1009</sup> At the end of June 1826 the family went to Ems, the spa town east of Koblenz at the Rhine and Lahn confluence, together with the Bernstorffs.<sup>1010</sup> This time Clausewitz took a complete cure with baths and taking the waters on a daily schedule until August. Now he felt immediate wellbeing and had a good appetite. Nassau where the former *Kanzler Freiherr* v. Stein lived was not far. They met a couple of times every week. The spa was also a social institution where people met and had conversations. Clausewitz met for example the English Prince, the Duke of Clarence.<sup>1011</sup>

Marie and Clausewitz continued their holiday, visiting Cologne and walking in the Hartz mountains between Ballenstädt and Stuppenberg in August 1826. His health was much

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<sup>1004</sup> Cf. Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Kritik', *Vom Kriege* 2:5, 312-34

<sup>1005</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], '*Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815*', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118. About the title see Hahlweg's note to the manuscript on page 943. The manuscript was undated and unsigned by Clausewitz. First published according to the title of the front page as '*Feldzug von 1815*', *Werke* Vol 8/10

<sup>1006</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], '*Übersicht des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich*', *Werke* 7/10, 325-56

<sup>1007</sup> Clausewitz [1826?], '*Über den Feldzug von 1813*', *Werke* 7/10 (1835), 317-24

<sup>1008</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 5 January 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 486-87

<sup>1009</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 12 April 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 487-88

<sup>1010</sup> Clausewitz had two months vacation from 30 May 1826 to visit Bad Ems according to Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Führertum*, Vol 5/10, 66. According to a letter for Gneisenau on 5 July 1826 Clausewitz had been on full treatment in Ems for nine days, which indicate an arrival around 25 June. See note below.

<sup>1011</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Ems 3/5/20 July 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 488-95



better but the throat problem had not been completely cured in Ems. He could swallow and talk, but felt somewhat listless due to the pressure of life.<sup>1012</sup> Clausewitz was still ill in October 1826, but life was endurable for the moment.<sup>1013</sup>

Several of the family's acquaintances were very ill and some also died during this time. Probably this was related in time to the effort he made to conceptualize defence and attack. Clausewitz reminded himself now and then that a hypochondriac mood was a sign of inner weakness, but by and large he felt quite happy in spite of his problems.<sup>1014</sup> A very large part of *Vom Kriege* and several strategic studies were apparently written when Clausewitz was seriously ill. This makes his effort even more impressive. He had some sort of large perspective about himself and his situation. The theoretical work was something he undertook more or less privately.

Crown Prince Wilhelm noted on 20 January 1827 that he attended Professor Ritter's lectures in geography, listened in addition four times a week to Lancizolle's lectures on law and right (*Recht*) and to Clausewitz's military lectures.<sup>1015</sup> The complete extent of the royal tutorial during the 1820s is not known clearly. Clausewitz's correspondence indicates that it was going on in 1821, but Wilhelm's note of 1827 is one of the few remaining traces. Clausewitz clearly desired promotion to *Generalleutnant*, but this never happened. However, the aristocratic status of Clausewitz and his brothers was finally acknowledged by the king on 30 January 1827, which was also a sign of final acceptance and forgiveness for 1812.<sup>1016</sup>

Some time between January and May 1827 his health seriously deteriorated again. Paret states that Clausewitz feared for his life this time.<sup>1017</sup> There is a gap in the correspondence with Gneisenau from 5 December 1826 until 19 June 1827. The family was then invited to spend their annual summer holiday on Gneisenau's estate Sommerschenburg in Sachsen.<sup>1018</sup> Clausewitz responded immediately that he was still partly paralyzed and recovering only slowly. He went out only to visit the spa or for a short trip by coach to make a visit. It was not yet possible to determine his state of recovery, whether he would be able to leave Berlin, which would not be until the middle of July, he thought.<sup>1019</sup> Gneisenau was however notified already on 5 July of their scheduled departure from Berlin on the 16 July, with an estimated time of arrival in Sommerschenburg 20 July.

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<sup>1012</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 26 August/7 September 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 495-503

<sup>1013</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 4 October 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 506-10

<sup>1014</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 18 November 1826, *Schriften* (1990), 513-15

<sup>1015</sup> Prinz Wilhem to Fürstin Luise Radziwill, Berlin 20 January 1827, printed in Kurt Jagow, *Jugendbekenntnisse des alten Kaisers. Briefe Kaiser Wilhelms I. an Fürstin Luise Radziwill Prinzessin von Preußen 1817 bis 1829* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1929), 230; Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf. 422

<sup>1016</sup> Priesdorff, *Soldatisches Führertum*, Vol 5/10, 66

<sup>1017</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 323; to my knowledge there are no more sources available in order to more exactly determine the time and level of Clausewitz's illness 1827.

<sup>1018</sup> Gneisenau to Herr und Frau Clausewitz, Sommerschenburg 15 June 1827, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 539

<sup>1019</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 19 June 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 520-21

Five days later Clausewitz wrote the important *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827. This was a short note on the present state of his work, which declared the first six books in *Vom Kriege* completed. To improve the work he would from now on use more explicitly a twofold approach to strategy, '*die doppelte Art des Krieges*', i.e. the double way, or kind, of war. He would also put more emphasis on the view of war as a continuation of *Staatspolitik*.<sup>1020</sup> These were just minor adjustments to make his reasoning clearer. Five days after the *Nachricht* Gneisenau was notified that Clausewitz had to postpone their departure from Berlin for 24 hours because Marie's mother was ill.<sup>1021</sup> It seems after all that Clausewitz recovered rather fast in June and early July 1827.

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This chapter analysed the composition of combat and fighting forces, which were components in middle of Clausewitz theoretical system of the warlike element. The chapter noted his use of historical case studies to clarify the 'inner truth' of experience rather than the total impression of outer appearances'. This resembles terms and perspectives used in other fields of Romantic hermenutics. It seems that Paret overstated Clausewitz's intellectual path towards becoming a historian and a scholar in the traditional sense. Clausewitz followed Scharnhorst in the use of historical experience as an empirical platform for theoretical inspiration and clarification of the present conduct of war.

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<sup>1020</sup> Clausewitz, 'Nachricht 10 July 1827', amended to *Vom Kriege*, 179-81

<sup>1021</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 15 July 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 524-25



## 11. THE PROBLEM

### THE LACK OF REGULARITY IN THE MIDST OF DEFENCE AND ATTACK

We would agree to this standpoint [a theory of war is impossible] and give up every attempt at theory, were not an entire set of propositions is evident without any difficulty: that defence is the stronger form with a negative purpose, attack the weaker with a positive purpose; that large success co-determines minor; that strategic effects can be traced back to certain *Schwerpunkte*; that a demonstration is a weaker use of force than a real attack, that it [the conduct of war] must be particularly conditional; that victory consists not just of conquering the battlefield but of the destruction of moral and physical fighting power, and this is mostly achieved first by pursuit after a battle won; that success is always grandest where one has wrested victory, that leapfrogging from one line [of operation] and direction to another can only be considered as a necessary evil; that the justification of long envelopment [*Umgehen*] can only originate from general superiority or from the superiority of one's lines of communication and retreat vis-à-vis the enemy; that the flank position [*Flankenstellung*] will also be conditioned by these circumstances; that every attack weakens as it proceeds.<sup>1022</sup>

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<sup>1022</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - winter 1827], 'Undated note amended to *Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 181-83, cf. 182-83. 'Wir würden in diese Meinung einstimmen und jeden Versuch einer Theorie aufgeben, wenn sich nicht eine ganze Anzahl von Sätzen ohne Schwierigkeit ganz evident machen ließe: daß die Verteidigung die stärkere Form mit dem negativen Zweck, der Angriff die schwächere mit dem positiven Zweck ist; daß die großen Erfolge die kleinen mitbestimmen; daß man also die strategischen Wirkungen auf gewisse Schwerpunkte zurückführen kann; daß eine Demonstration eine schwächere Kraftverwendung ist als ein wirklicher Angriff, daß sie also besonders bedingt sein muß; daß der Sieg nicht bloß in der Eroberung des Schlachtfeldes, sondern in der Zerstörung der physischen und moralischen Streitkraft besteht, und daß diese meistens erst im Verfolgen der gewonnenen Schlacht erreicht wird; daß der Erfolg immer am größten ist, wo man den Sieg erfochten hat, daß also das Überspringen von einer Linie und Richtung auf die andere nur als ein notwendiges Übel betrachtet werden kann; daß die Berechtigung zum Umgehen nur von der Überlegenheit überhaupt oder von der Überlegenheit der eigenen Verbindungs- und Rückzugslinie über die des Gegners entstehen kann; daß Flankenstellungen also auch durch dieselben Verhältnisse bedingt werden; daß sich jeder Angriff im Vorgehen schwächt.'

This chapter elaborates the problem Clausewitz confronted in the process of dynamically conceptualizing the two forms of war, i.e. the intrinsic reciprocity of the warlike element. This was the analytical step before the war plan, the part also dealing with the political side of war. He was in poor health and had worked hard for a long time. Despite his troubles he was determined that a theory, or philosophy, was possible, as the quote indicates. The chapter explains how he solved this puzzle by interpreting the history of war as a 'device of attack and defence' among other things.

First, the 'undated note' is revised and it is argued it was written in 1826 or in the winter of 1827, which more or less tallies with the interpretations of Hahlweg and Gat. Secondly, the chapter clarifies Clausewitz's solution of the problem of the reciprocity of defence and attack by explicating limited aim. He revisited the dichotomy of conventional war and natural war and used the former as epitome for situations of limited tension. Consequently, the concept of *Spannung*, tension, as described at the beginning of Book 8 belongs to the solution. Finally, the 'device of attack and defence' between *Schwerpunkt* and *Kulminationspunkt* is described.

## REVIEWING THE PROSPECT OF A COHERENT THEORY FOR THINKING STRATEGY

Clausewitz depicted in the 'undated note' the state of his work as a '*Sammlung von Werkstücken*', a collection of workpieces. The note was most likely written at a moment when he had trouble to conceptualize defence and attack.<sup>1023</sup> From the incoherent pieces up to now his ambition was to construct a *Theorie des großen Krieges*, a theory of the Great War, a theory of strategy in other words; but he was mostly not satisfied with the result so far. The texts written for Book 6 on defence he considered as a first attempt, which had to be reworked. Clausewitz regarded the main lineaments (*Hauptlineamente*) of his work as right so far.

He regarded especially his view of war (*in der Ansicht vom Kriege*) as right, which most likely referred to the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element, conceptually depicted in the *Grundvorstellung*. These ideas were a product of long and multisided thinking on war, with a firm practical scope in mind, derived from experience and intercourse with distinguished soldiers. Book 7 on attack was spoken of as future. Clausewitz had for the moment, probably sometime in 1826, just written some quick standpoints for this part. Book 8 on the war plan was also addressed as future, but with no work at all completed. This book was to address the political and human side of war in more detail.

The first chapter of Book 1 was described as the only text he was satisfied with. This statement and Marie's dating of the undated note in her Preface of 1832 as 'very late' caused Eberhard Kessel to date the note to 1830 when Clausewitz closed his unfinished work before going to Breslau.<sup>1024</sup> This interpretation projecting the note as

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<sup>1023</sup> Clausewitz[1826 - winter 1827], 'Undated note amended to *Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 181-83

<sup>1024</sup> Kessel's argument was part of a long debate in Germany initiated after World War One about the meaning of *Vom Kriege* in the light of Clausewitz's prefaces and notes. See Otto Hinze, 'Delbrück, Clausewitz und die Strategie Friedrichs des Großen', *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte* 33 (1920), 131-77 cf. 151; Herbert Rosinski,

'epic' was first suggested by Herbert Rosinski (1935), which Kessel accepted despite other differences of opinion. Kessel's interpretation of the undated note was questioned in 1989 by Azar Gat.<sup>1025</sup> He argued for an earlier date before the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827, due to the statement of work in progress. Most modern interpretations seem to accept Gat's reinterpretation.<sup>1026</sup> Gat was clearly on the right track, even though his analysis was limited to a comparison of the two notes.

Gat suggested the undated note was written in early 1827, a few months before Clausewitz's second note, the *Nachricht*, which has a clear date: 10 July.<sup>1027</sup> In the undated note, Clausewitz's tone is resigned. He wrote of the uncompleted manuscript to be found after his death. Kessel had also pondered early 1827 as a possible time, in view of Clausewitz's illness and the tone. But he eventually gave 1830, arguing from the status Clausewitz attributed to chapter one of Book 1, as the only piece he was really satisfied with.<sup>1028</sup> Hahlweg, however, had in fact long before Gat interpreted the undated note to 1827 in *Christen*, which did not appear in print until 1990.<sup>1029</sup> Neither Kessel nor Gat knew or took note of the drafts to *Vom Kriege* published in this collection.

The undated note may have been written in early 1827 but more likely in 1826 when Clausewitz could not sufficiently elaborate the reciprocity of defence and attack. The problem faintly depicted in the undated note was solved by inventing the 'device of attack and defence'. For this to happen he studied to elaborate war plans from the distinction of limited aim and overthrow. Clausewitz's intention was always for the work to be published after his death, which Marie's 1832 Preface clarified.<sup>1030</sup> It was therefore natural to him to speak of publication after he was gone. He was as mentioned frequently ill from 1824 onwards. The undated note clearly had nothing to do with Clausewitz closing his box before going to Breslau in 1830. The internal evidence as listed below is overwhelming when his analytical work is uncovered in detail.

1. The state of work clearly corresponds to the time before the *Nachricht*. The model chapter Clausewitz had in mind was not the later seminal chapter 'What is War?'

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'Entwicklung von Clausewitz Werk Vom Kriege im Lichte Seiner Vorreden und Nachrichten', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol 151 (1935), 278-93 cf.285; Eberhard Kessel, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Clausewitz Werk Vom Kriege', *Historische Zeitschrift* 152 (1935), 97-100, cf. 98; Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.412. Kessel's argument was continued in Clausewitz, 'Unfinished Note, Presumably written in 1830', *On War* (Howard & Paret 1976), 70-71; Aron, *Den Krieg Denken*, 92-102.

<sup>1025</sup> Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz's final notes', *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, Vol 1 (1989), 45-50; Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 257-65

<sup>1026</sup> See for example Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War*, 70 ff. Gat's interpretation was contested in Lütsch, *Jeder Krieg is anders*, 70-75.

<sup>1027</sup> Gat, *Clausewitz's final notes*, 45, 47; See also Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 257-65, cf. 261

<sup>1028</sup> Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.412

<sup>1029</sup> Hahlweg, 'Niederschriften des Werkes Vom Kriege, in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1990), 623-29, cf. 625

<sup>1030</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz, 'Vorrede 30 June 1832', *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf. 173

printed in *Vom Kriege*, as all interpreters have assumed. It was instead the first *Grundvorstellung* entitled '1<sup>st</sup> Chapter. Purpose of War'.<sup>1031</sup> The way Clausewitz opened the first chapter of the later Book 8 clearly supports this interpretation: 'In the chapter on the essence and purpose of war [*Wesen und Zweck des Krieges*] we have virtually sketched his [war's] total concept and foreshadowed his conditioning relations to surrounding things, to start with a proper *Grundvorstellung*.'<sup>1032</sup> This framing of the first chapter literally refers to the framing of the earlier chapter one of Book 1. The work of revising the *Grundvorstellung* printed in *Vom Kriege* was written in late 1827. I will return to this text in more detail.

2. In the undated note Clausewitz elaborated the difficulties of framing a coherent theory of war for thinking strategy, but he did indicate some evident possibilities. In his opinion very few people had clear ideas about strategy; that was 'the necessary in constant coherence' (*das Notwendige in beständigem Zusammenhange*) reduced to *Vorstellungen*. Most commanders just followed their tact of strategic judgement (*Takt des Urteils*), which got things right more or less only depending on their instinctive genius. Almost all Great Captains had had the instinct to strike right.

However, when it came to giving strategic advice (cf. general staff) clear ideas became necessary to prove the inner coherence of reasoning. Military education was poor in this aspect, tending to make all strategic advice random talk. Everyone argued for their personal standpoint with no firm foundation for their ideas. Clausewitz regarded the many contradictory views as make every course of action a compromise, a middle way of no real value. Thus clear views of strategy were neglected.

To produce a philosophical construct of the *Kriegskunst* was extremely difficult, as proved by the many bad attempts of other writers. Clausewitz pointed out that most professionals considered a theory of this kind impossible, since the object in question, success, could not be embraced by one permanent law of thought. Clausewitz partly agreed but also saw the potential of certain concepts, as the opening quote of this chapter indicates. These ideas convey the state of his mind when the composition of combat was clarified in Books 4 and 5.

3. The standpoints listed were apparently the embryo from which in 1826-1827 Clausewitz tried to conceptualize the reciprocity of defence and attack. He was puzzled, since he had interpreted defence as stronger *per se*, with the implication that an attack could be defeated by its own effort. He would temporarily abandon the quest for a theoretically coherent view of war to find a way out (*Ausweg*) for defence and implicitly produce something clever about attack. This had been a mode of thinking of war as one thing, thinking strategy from a grand logical edifice modified in reality. Instead he took up the distinction he had distilled in Koblenz between conventional war and natural war.

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<sup>1031</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges' in *Schriften* (1990), 630-36

<sup>1032</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Einleitung', *Vom Kriege*, 8:1, 949. 'In dem Kapitel vom Wesen und Zweck des Krieges haben wir seinen Gesamtbegriff gewissermaßen skizziert und seine Verhältnisse zu den ihn umgebenden Dingen angedeutet, um mit einer richtigen Grundvorstellungen zu anfangen.'

This was adopted and slightly modified to cover the gap of attack and defence as 'the double way of war'. This meant more or less two logics of war manifested in two types of warlike aim. The first was constructed out of natural war from the logical consequence of force. The other way, more restricted, thinking strategy as war, was political bargaining – a diplomatic *Kriegskunst*. This distinction was developed in a set of studies and in the outline of Books 6 to 7. Clausewitz saved his initial view of war as 'one thing' by integrating war into a revised concept of *Politik* in Book 8 and in the revision of the *Grundvorstellung* during the autumn of 1827. This adjustment also dissolved the device employed as the double way, or kind, of war.

4. The work on Books 6 and 7 brought him to interpret war as a 'device of defence and attack', enabling him to construct coherence. The distinction of limited aim interpreted from history and overthrow as the concept depicting modern Great War was understood as a matter of *Spannung*, thus tension. Warlike activity with a limited aim close to equilibrium lacked the coherence of polarised war, which made war one thing and easy to conceptualise. The view of tension and lack of clear warlike logic close to equilibrium caused Clausewitz to recognise a need to consider *Politik* better in his next note about his work, which was the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827. This note explained the need to revise the *Grundvorstellung* made in Koblenz to integrate the element of *Politik* more clearly along the warlike element if one was to think strategy properly.

5. Clausewitz finally revised Book 2 to develop the problems of a theory of war in a way that differed from his contemporaries'. He stressed criticism as the proper balance for theory to overcome the obvious risk of contradicting practice. Theory was to be understood as purely didactic rather than as teachings of ruling wisdom for conduct. The conditions of conflict were explicated as the womb of war, which took further his 1827 statement that war is a continuation of *Politik* by other means. Clausewitz finally asserted, in Book 8, that the element of *Politik*, in the broader sense, saved the concept of war as one thing.

#### RETHINKING DEFENCE BY CLARIFYING LIMITED AIM

A comparison of the statement on work in progress in the undated note and in the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827 shows that Clausewitz completed Book 6 on defence at the latest during the spring of 1827.<sup>1033</sup> The note referred to the reduction of strategic effect to certain *Schwerpunkte*, which indicates he had spelled out this concept in more detail around 1826. The concept as such had been present in his ideas without a name since Koblenz. Book 7 on attack was sketched along with or just after the completion of Book 6. Defence was the premier conceptual form of war in Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy. Attack was consequently clarified as a reflex, bound to the strength of defence *per se*.

A couple of chapters for Book 8 were in addition outlined in this period as preliminary considerations of the many problems at hand, as a '*ein bloßes rohes Durcharbeiten durch die Masse*'. Clausewitz noted in the *Nachricht* that these preliminary considerations for Book 8 had fulfilled their purpose – to find the way forward. One text he had in mind was most probably '*To the War plan with limited Aim*' published in

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<sup>1033</sup> Clausewitz, '*Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81



the 1990 collection. It was written in his usual study format in explanatory, unfolding paragraphs, here nineteen.<sup>1034</sup> A second text written with Book 8 in mind that tried to find the way forward to conceptualise defence was probably: 'War Plan, when Overthrow of the Enemy is the Aim'.<sup>1035</sup> This was published as the final chapter of Book 8.

The first text was a brainstorm to make a war plan with a limited aim to further clarify implications regarding the relation of defence and attack. There was nothing novel to his ideas, but they continued to elaborate the dichotomy clarified in his historical interpretation in Koblenz. He was now just making a clearer conception of the variable war aim. This required him to spell out the twofold approach to strategy he had faintly distilled already in 1816-1818. Now he was providing more details to catch limited political ambition in relation to the logic of the warlike element in the *Urbestimmung*, as epitomised in terms of swift progress towards bloody decision and overthrow.

The variation had so far been depicted by the terms modifications and reductions. This was not clear enough for conceptualizing the conduct of war into the forms of defence and attack. Several key aspects about fighting forces addressed in the recent Book 5, such as supply and roads, were further elaborated in this text, together with a reference to the fortified camp at Drissa in 1812 as a relic of the past, which had got lost by itself into modern time. These small details further support the interpretation that Clausewitz wrote this text in 1826 or even earlier; anyway before completion of Book 6 where these standpoints were elaborated further.

Clausewitz returned to the wars and military thought of the previous century, which had been dominated by limited aims, such as conquering a province as Frederick had done in Silesia. The ease of defending a province was set against the ease of conquering it, making the former the most important for choosing the basic line of strategic approach. The limited aim was, however, never preferable to a larger aim, because it could never accomplish as much. It was more of a substitute when confidence and larger forces were absent.

If the object of attack was important, such as a province with several fortresses, then a well-managed war (*ein tüchtiger Krieg*) was best. As in his later writing, the offensive battle was presented as more difficult to win, a conclusion he had often suggested. Clausewitz regarded an offensive enterprise with no battle, thus without victory, as simply an attempt to gain time in a decent manner, perhaps to fish in the fog. To plan such an offensive enterprise first one had to think about the opponent's reaction. This Clausewitz elucidated with the difference of Prussia in 1792 and in 1806. Political courage and response were thus a major concern in how to think strategy, which can be compared to the concept of polarity.

If one pursued a small aim, such as to conquer a fortress, the defence did not lose any power like the attack did, instead often the opposite. This type of small enterprise had

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<sup>1034</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Zum Kriegs-Plan mit beschränktem Ziel', *Schriften* (1990), 675-80,

<sup>1035</sup> Clausewitz [1826- Spring 1827], 'Kriegsplan, Wenn Niederwerfung des Feindes das Ziel ist', *Vom Kriege* 8:9, 1009-1040

to be entirely supplied with money and transported goods, like in the previous century, contrary to the modern system of requisitioning. Supplying the forces increased in importance in this type of campaign. The clever use of opportunity also increased in importance, though Clausewitz had downplayed it in larger circumstances. This had also strengthened his belief that a theory of strategy derived from the warlike element was possible.

These old wars were politically characterised by thinking more about security than hurting the enemy. 'This is how it mostly looks in the Cabinets and from here the instructions to the commander will be issued.'<sup>1036</sup> The *Unternehmungsgeist*, the enterprising spirit, of the commander would consequently determine whether he would take the risk of playing, using his forces for a positive aim to achieve something more than equilibrium. Waiting (*Abwarten*) was otherwise an apparent feature of this type of conflict.

The more one used fortified positions the more static and predictable the system of defence became. He reviewed the attitude to battle appearing after the Thirty Years' War. Battle had been considered more or less as an evil thing. It had been clearly connected with political bargaining on rather equal terms in spite of there being a defeated party and a victor. The state of victory in one battle was not used to inflict more harm on the enemy, to drive him into a defenceless position; instead one was happy to begin negotiations almost instantly:

The peculiarity of these wars was that the battles were regarded as true instruments of peace. One considered them not as nowadays, as means to inflict great harm on the enemy, instead [they were thought of] as the harm itself and when the fighting was over one asked in the negotiation: 'What do you say about this?' – The success of battle consisted therefore of the larger casualties of the defeated on the battlefield, his loss of a small strip of evacuated land in the next couple of days and the moral impression [rising from this]. – With these three moderating weights the defeated party was weighed in the balance for negotiation, and the victor considered mostly only the weight of these. One considers victory not as the birth itself as today, instead as the egg that should be hatched first.

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<sup>1036</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Zum Kriegs-Plan mit beschränktem Ziel', *Schriften* (1990), 675-80, cf. 677. "So sieht es meistens in den Kabinetten aus und hierauf werden die Instruktionen für die Feldherrn gebaut."

<sup>1037</sup> Clausewitz [1826- spring 1827], 'Zum Kriegsplan mit beschränktem Ziel', *Schriften*, (1990), 675-80, cf. 678. 'Es ist eine Eigentümlichkeit dieser Kriege, dass die Schlachten wie eigentliche Friedens-Instrumente betrachtet wurden. Man sah sie nicht wie jetzt an, als das Mittel, dem Feinde einen großen Schaden beizubringen, sondern wie den Schaden selbst und wenn man sie geschlagen hatte, so frug man in den in den Unterhandlungen: „Nun was sagst ihr dazu?“ – Der Erfolg der Schlacht bestand also in dem größern Verlust, den der Besiegte auf dem Schlachtfelde und in den nächsten Tagen darauf erlitt, ein kleiner Landstreich, der eingeräumt war's und der moralische Eindruck. – Mit diesen drei mäßigen Gewichten wurde sie in der Schale der Unterhandlungen gelegt und der Sieger sah hauptsächlich nur, was sie da wiegen würde. Jetzt sieht man einen Sieg nicht wie die Geburth selbst an, sondern wie das Ei, was erst ausgebrütet werden soll.'

Note this as an inspiration to the double way of war. Clausewitz had previously argued for the *Grundsatz* of joining forces; here it was necessary to divide them. This old approach almost brought the ancient system of cordon to mind and the best line of approach was indeed difficult to strike. It was easy to understand why commanders had tried to hide their forces behind protected lines, which led to stagnation, however. These older wars were not conducted along the main roads, nor were they pursued into the capital or into the interior of warring countries. They were instead located on the outskirts and in the countryside just to set up a convenient depot or so.

As long as the enemy did not aim for the heart of the state one had nothing to fear, which was a big difference from the recent wars of life and death. Phull's fortified camp at Drissa was in that sense a relic from a past time, which had got lost and wandered into modern time. The text ended by discussing detachments and division of forces further. Here we should remember the *Grundsatz* of joining forces in time, which indicated his concern with rule and exception in varying strategic circumstances. Here was a problem he had started to address in large war with far-reaching aims using the concept of *Schwerpunkt*, moderated by the diminishing power of attack that terminated in the concept of *Kulminationspunkt*.

These concepts were elaborated in more detail in a second exploratory text on the more aggressive war plan, entitled: 'War Plan, when Overthrow of the Enemy is the Aim'. This text seems also to have been part of Clausewitz's rethinking of defence and attack in 1826-1827. It was later printed as chapter nine of Book 8 perhaps with some additions. It was a long piece that explored the proper aiming of a campaign to overthrow an enemy. The text referred to a chapter never written about *Oberbefehl*, high command, to end Book 8.<sup>1038</sup> This indicates that Clausewitz had some sort of detailed plan for his work at this stage. It referred also to the concept of culmination point without distinction (attack or victory), which indicates a time early in the development of Book 6.

Clausewitz suggested two *Grundsätze* to follow for directing a campaign when the aim was to overthrow the enemy. These were to be considered as starting points to set the basic tone for planning. First reduce the enemy power to as few *Schwerpunkte* as possible to be able to reduce the enterprise to as few main actions (*Haupthandlungen*) as possible. All other action should be kept subordinate and less important. The second *Grundsatz* was to act as swiftly as possible to strike these *Schwerpunkte* with maximum relative power. The political side of campaign planning in a coalition was identified as in the weak spot of diverse interests to fight with coherent war aims. Clausewitz suggested the following approach to developing a campaign with the aim of defeating an enemy:

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<sup>1038</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Kriegsplan, Wenn Niederwerfung des Feindes das Ziel ist', *Vom Kriege* 8:9, 1009-1040, cf. 1034

The first thing to do is to reduce the weight of enemy power to as few *Schwerpunkte* as possible; that is reduce the striking to as few main actions as possible, preferably to one; one should keep all subordinate action as subordinate as possible to the end. In a word, the first *Grundsatz* is: to act [conceptually] as concentratedly as possible. The second *Grundsatz*: act as swiftly as possible, that is to say make no unwarranted halt or detour. The reduction of enemy power to one *Schwerpunkt* depends: first on the political *Zusammenhang* [context/coherence/interrelations] itself. If the army has only one master there is mostly no problem; the problem is hardly larger if it is a combined army where one party acts with no interests at stake [strike the driving force]; if it is a coalition of common interests it comes down to the level of friendship; we have already addressed this. Secondly, the location of the theatre of war where the different hostile armies appear.<sup>1039</sup>

This text might be an answer to a question put forward in the short unfinished study of the campaign in the autumn of 1813.<sup>1040</sup> In this text Clausewitz pondered Bonaparte's situation after the armistice in the summer of 1813 and the problem of developing a strategy when many directions and options were possible in relation to the *Grundsatz* of keeping forces united as far as possible. This complex might have been part of the troubles Clausewitz indicated in the undated note.

The literature of the period shows that the term *Schwerpunkt* was already in use in military discourse; for example in the account *Die Strategie und ihre Anwendung* (1821) by Lieutenant colonel Ritter von Xylander. He elaborated the importance of striking the capital in modern strategy: '...the capital of the country, which is to be considered as the concentrate of the country as the *Schwerpunkt* of the same, is therefore a strategic point of more excellent importance.'<sup>1041</sup> This further exemplifies that Clausewitz often took existing ideas and developed them into his framework. A

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<sup>1039</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Kriegsplan, Wenn Niederwerfung des Feindes das Ziel ist', *Vom Kriege* 8:9, 1009-1040, cf. 1009-10. Der erste ist: das Gewicht der feindlichen Macht auf so wenig Schwerpunkte als möglich zurückzuführen, wenn es sein kann, auf einen; wiederum den Stoß gegen diese Schwerpunkte auf so wenig Haupthandlungen als möglich zurückzuführen, wenn es sein kann, auf eine; endlich alle untergeordnete Handlungen so untergeordnet als möglich zu halten. Mit einem Wort, der erste Grundsatz ist: so konzentriert als möglich zu handeln. Der zweite Grundsatz: so schnell als möglich zu handeln, also keinen Aufenthalt und keinen Umweg ohne hinreichenden Grund. Das Reduzieren der feindlichen Macht auf einen Schwerpunkt hängt ab: Erstens von dem politischen Zusammenhang derselben. Sind es Heere eines Herrn, so hat es meist keine Schwierigkeit; sind es verbündete Heere, deren das eine als bloßer Bundesgenosse ohne eigenes Interesse handelt, so ist die Schwierigkeit nicht viel größer; sind es zu gemeinschaftlichen Zwecken Verbündete, so kommt es auf den Grad der Befreundung an; wir haben davon schon geredet. Zweitens von der Lage des Kriegstheaters, auf welchem die verschiedenen feindlichen Heere erscheinen.'

<sup>1040</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Über den Feldzug von 1813.', *Werke* Vol 7/10, 317-24

<sup>1041</sup> Ritter von Xylander, *Die Strategie und ihre Anwendung* (München: Lindauer, 1821), 21-22. '...die Hauptstadt des landes, welche als das concentrirte Land, als der Schwerpunkt desselben zu betrachten ist, ist daher ein strategischer Punkt von vorzüglicher wichtigkeit.'

fine example of his military-intellectual innovation was the 'device', addressed in the next section.

#### THE DEVICE OF DEFENCE AND ATTACK BETWEEN *KULMINATIONSPUNKT* AND *SCHWERPUNKT*

Clausewitz's rethinking compressed the history of war into a simplified 'device of defence and attack', clarified in the middle of Book 6. This helped him to solve the many differences occurring in experience, which had puzzled him. The concept of defence was closely related to attack in tactical, strategic and political senses, a view present in his texts since at least 1812.<sup>1042</sup>

Defence was simply defined as: '*Das Abwehren eines Stoßes*', thus repelling a blow, constituted by the peculiarity of awaiting this blow (*das Abwarten*). This made every action in war a defensive one, which contradicted any absolute idea. A pure concept was thus not possible; instead, defence had to be thought of as a perfect relative concept. A defensive campaign could consequently be fought in the manner of attack. Defence in the strategic sense was not for Clausewitz an immediate shield, instead a shield constructed of skilled tricks (*geschickte Streiche*).<sup>1043</sup> A major advantage of defence lay in the overarching purpose of maintaining, which was much easier than winning or gaining:

What is the purpose of defence? Maintaining. Maintaining is easier than winning, from this it already follows that defence is easier than attack as long as the means are equal. What underlies this greater ease of maintaining or preserving? The fact that all the time that elapses unused goes into the pan of the defender's balance scales. He harvests, where he has not sown. Refraining from attack from false points of view, from fear, from inactivity always benefits the defender. This advantage saved the Prussian State more than once from downfall during the Seven Years' War. – This advantage of defence given by conception and purpose lies in the nature of every defence and is in ordinary life fixed by the Latin saying *beati sunt possidentes* [blessed are those that have] especially in similar discourse of right in the matter of war. Another advantage that only arises from the nature of war is that it is mostly defence that enjoys support from geographical position.<sup>1044</sup>

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<sup>1042</sup> Clausewitz [February 1812], 'Bekanntnisdenschrift', *Schriften* (1966), cf. 742.

<sup>1043</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Angriff und Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:1, 613-17

<sup>1044</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Angriff und Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:1, 613-17, cf. 614. 'Was ist der Zweck der Verteidigung? *Erhalten*. Erhalten ist leichter als gewinnen, schon daraus folgt, daß die Verteidigung bei vorausgesetzten gleichen Mitteln leichter sei als der Angriff. Worin liegt aber die größere Leichtigkeit des Erhaltens oder Bewahrens? Darin, daß alle Zeit, welche ungenutzt verstreicht, in die Waagschale des Verteidigers fällt. Er erntet, wo er nicht gesäet hat. Jedes Unterlassen des Angriffs aus falscher Ansicht, aus Furcht, aus Trägheit, kommt dem Verteidiger zugute. Dieser Vorteil hat den preußischen Staat im Siebenjährigen Kriege mehr als einmal vom Untergang gerettet. – Dieser aus Begriff und Zweck sich ergebende Vorteil der Verteidigung liegt in der Natur aller Verteidigung und ist im übrigen Leben, besonders in dem dem Kriege so ähnlichen Rechtsverkehr, durch das lateinische Sprichwort *beati sunt possidentes* [Glücklich sind die Besitzenden] fixiert. Ein anderer, der nur aus der Natur des

All time the attacker wasted before achieving a decision was to the advantage of the defender. The defence had thus in itself a potency for the conduct of war not dependent on initiative. The nature of war reinforced defence physically with the assistance of space, which implied the diminishing power of attack as well as better local support for defence which was easier to integrate. Defence was, further, reinforced by the moral discourse of right (*Recht*). It was not just easier to conduct; it was also the strongest form of war *per se*, founded on the negative, i.e. combined political-military-moral, purpose of maintaining. In consequence attack was the weaker, founded on the positive purpose of conquest.

In Clausewitz's 'Prussian logic' defence was used to obtain better correlation of forces, to regain equilibrium and the ability to switch into the offensive on better terms. 'Since, then, one with the support of defence becomes victor [in battle], a more favourable correlation of forces is usually brought about, and it is the natural way in war, to start with the defensive and to end with the offensive.'<sup>1045</sup> In a polemic tone Clausewitz asked every military mind unilaterally preferring the vigour of attack whether attack were the strongest form of conducting war. If it was, then defence would have faded away as obsolete and never used. This was obviously not the case and his reasoning thus echoed 1812 in a more profound theoretical framework.

The relation of attack and defence in tactics was elaborated according to four angles; tactical victory; surprise, using the advantage of terrain and attack from several sides. Their timely relation was very important in strategy. Clausewitz frequently returned to his historical interpretation propounded in 1816-18 of the development of the *Kriegskunst* from the Thirty Years' War to the 'New Wars' or the 'New Way of War' after 1792.<sup>1046</sup> Older concepts of victory in strategy were refuted, that the strategic purpose of war was victory. Note that this refuted view resembles present understandings. But strategy had no victory in Clausewitz's way of thinking. Victory was a tactical concept and a pure means among others to a political purpose. The fulfilment of purpose was the realm of success, which was not generic.

Strategy was simply: from one side the preparation for tactical activity – tactical victory; and from the other, the use of fighting results for the political purpose of war. This was no new standpoint, but it clearly indicated that the view of war and combat as a continuation of *Politik* was indeed never far away. The main principles to consider for strategic activity were for Clausewitz the advantage of terrain, surprise, the attack

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Krieges hinzukommt, ist der Beistand der örtlichen Lage, welche die Verteidigung vorzugsweise genießt.'

<sup>1045</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Angriff und Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:1, 613-17, cf.615. 'Da man nun, indem man unter ihrem Beistand Sieger wird, gewöhnlich ein günstigeres Verhältnis der Kräfte herbeiführt, so ist auch der natürliche Gang im Kriege, mit der Verteidigung anzufangen und mit der Offensive zu enden.'

<sup>1046</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Wie verhalten sich Angriff und Verteidigung in der Taktik zueinander', *Vom Kriege* 6:2, 618-21

from many angles like in tactics, support of the theatre, support of people and the use of superior moral forces.<sup>1047</sup>

He continued with the problem of how to think about the relative effect of forces in movement. Jomini was known for advocating inner lines, to which Clausewitz objected as a general principle. The importance of inner lines was nevertheless observed to increase with greater space. Clausewitz projected a mobile concept of defence, which in the end made the normative ideas of concentricity of attack and eccentricity of defence intermingle into a state of likeness.<sup>1048</sup> The character of strategic defence was more or less to consume the opponent's aggressive energy in order to prepare the switch to the offensive, perhaps via a first defensive victory. Clausewitz's image resembled Prussia's situation in 1813. The time during which the attacker wasted his energy to achieve decision, the defender had to use well to prepare retaliation, to strike while the iron was hot:

A swift and powerful transition to attack – the lighting sword of retaliation – is the shining moment of defence; a person who does not include this idea as well, or even more who does not raise this in the concept of defence, will never focus on the superiority of defence, he will always think that one destroys the enemy and acquires through the means of attack. These means do not depend on the manner in which one ties the knots but how one unties them. There is also great confusion when by [concept of] attack one always understands surprise assault [*Überfall*] and consequently thinks of defence as nothing more than distress and confusion.<sup>1049</sup>

This duality is a good example of Clausewitz's multisided reasoning that merged defence with attack, disproportionally energised by the motive of defence. The conqueror was ironically depicted as a unilaterally peace-loving figure, happy to invade a state without any resistance. Clausewitz referred to Bonaparte and a rumour from the time of his greatness, which had projected him as a 'great friend of peace'. War was consequently more to the defender, who laid his future existence in the outcome.

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<sup>1047</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Wie verhalten sich Angriff und Verteidigung in der Strategie zueinander', *Vom Kriege* 6:3, 622-27

<sup>1048</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Konzentrität des Angriffs und Exzentrität der Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:4, 628-32

<sup>1049</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Charakter der Strategischen Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:5, 633-35, cf. 634. 'Ein schneller, kräftiger Übergang zum Angriff - das blitzende Vergeltungsschwert - ist der glänzendste Punkt der Verteidigung; wer ihn sich nicht gleich hinzudenkt, oder vielmehr, wer ihn nicht gleich in den Begriff der Verteidigung aufnimmt, dem wird nimmer mehr die Überlegenheit der Verteidigung einleuchten, er wird immer nur an die Mittel denken, die man durch den Angriff dem Feinde zerstört und sich erwirbt, welche Mittel aber nicht von der Art, den Knoten zu schürzen, sondern ihn aufzulösen, abhängen. Ferner ist es eine grobe Verwechslung, wenn man unter Angriff immer einen Überfall versteht und sich folglich unter Verteidigung nichts als Not und Verwirrung denkt.'

Clausewitz's purpose in addressing strategy for Prussia's situation was very clear in Book 6. Defence had to be prepared by all available means, especially to cultivate national moral virtue. He stressed the importance of a capable army ready to fight a mobile war, a commander who did not await the enemy, anxiously and perplexed by the past and a people who did not fear its enemies. Preparation for defence was about to counter failing ideas of impotence and paralysis in the sudden moment of hostility, which reflected Clausewitz's experience of Prussia's problem in 1806.

He continued to elaborate aspects of defence such as *Landwehr*, fortresses and arming of the people to display the range of defensive means. The concept of defence was much more than a military manner or a form of war. It connected the state, the armed forces and the people in the spirit of Scharnhorst's ideas. The missing intimacy between people and army had been a major problem for the old state prior to Jena in 1806, a problem which the Prussian reform had tried to change. Clausewitz's ideas on institutionalising defence followed clearly the values and ambitions of the reform, but he expanded the scope into action.<sup>1050</sup>

A more philosophical justification of the strength of defence from the reciprocity of attack was made. *Grundsätze* of defence had to be founded in attack and vice versa. In a philosophical sense war started with defence as the first point of fighting. Consequently, the activity of defence reflected the concept of war, hence the warlike element, very well. Defence, and the clever use of switch, was to Clausewitz more or less the embodiment of war in a conceptual sense.<sup>1051</sup> This view can be compared to the *Urbestimmung*.

Clausewitz's next chapter dwelt at length on ways of resistance. He was obviously very satisfied and portrayed the result as the clearest so far according to his ambition not to issue any new precepts or methods for the conduct of war but to make the old ones visible, investigated and reduced to their simplest elements.<sup>1052</sup> It was perhaps here Clausewitz sorted out, at least partly, the problem stated in the undated note.

He had distilled two major *Widerstandsarten*, ways of resistance, (cf. also the double way of war) to defeat an attacker in defensive action; either by the sword in battle or through the attacker's own efforts *per se*, as in the campaign in Russia in 1812. This duality constituted in effect a larger fundamental problem for the conduct of war, which perhaps led Clausewitz to include *Politik* in the actual thinking of strategy. An over-ambitious positive political purpose could destroy itself through sheer effort.

Defence was first conceptualized into two interacting components, waiting (*das Abwarten*) and action (*das Handeln*). In larger enterprises, such as campaigns and wars, these two components intermingled. Waiting was obviously very dear to Clausewitz. Older theory had totally overlooked this aspect while it had long been crucial in practice. Defence was always a reaction, the repatriation of a blow. This simple but complex political, military and moral condition made defence the strongest form of

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<sup>1050</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Umfang der Verteidigungsmittel', *Vom Kriege* 6:6, 636-43

<sup>1051</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Wechselwirkung von Anriff und Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:7, 644-46

<sup>1052</sup> Clausewitz [1826 -Spring 1827], 'Widerstandsarten', *Vom Kriege* 6:8, 647-64, cf. 664



war, a means to defeat the enemy more surely and easily. Awaiting was crucial to achieve the right set of conditions for decisive action.

Clausewitz elaborated different ways of resistance and returned to the concept of *Kulminationspunkt* first employed in the studies of the Russian campaign. At least once this term had been referred to by the similar term '*culbutirt*'; that was to upset someone's applecart.<sup>1053</sup> This was a concept obviously used in military literature, but with a vague meaning and subject to his criticism.<sup>1054</sup> In physics and other fields of thought the term was used to depict the apogee, which resembled his understanding. Clausewitz had used 'culmination point' about his own career path in 1821, so the term was not new to him at this point. In Book 4 concurrently with the study of the campaign in Russia, culmination was used to suggest the apogee of a battle or a campaign; the moment when one side started to lose moral power seriously.<sup>1055</sup>

As long as the defender increased his power regularly and the attacker weakened his – the 'non-decision' was in the interest of the former. The concept of culmination point was perfect to Clausewitz's way of thinking. It would occur with necessity as a matter of time, which quite sufficiently clarified the advantage to the defender of waiting. It was nevertheless impossible to pin down as an exact rule of how to think.

The '*Wendepunkt*', turning point, in time depended on circumstances and different conditions. Winter had often been viewed as a natural turning point, suggesting retreat for an attacker in the absence of a decision, but the pattern was too weak to adopt as a general rule. This was proved by, for example, the events at Torre Vedras in the Peninsular War in 1809-1810, when the winter was used by Wellington to prepare the defence of Lisbon and stop the French offensive in 1810. The defence had consequently a double mode of decision; the attacker could be defeated in battle or simply by his own effort.

This justified Clausewitz's theoretical view of tactical success, bloody or bloodless, as the only basically effective means to construct strategy. The absence of tactical success for the attacker would simply by itself work for the purpose of the defender, which reflected the bloodless solution. The employment of strategic combinations could however never be considered as something independent (*niemals als etwas Selbständiges*). A commander such as Bonaparte who had made strategy his entire skill understood quite well the value of tactical success. He had frequently and ruthlessly forced his opponents into battle and defeated them with his entire strategic web because he never hesitated about the outcome. However a cautious commander like

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<sup>1053</sup> This term was seemingly more frequently used in German military literature in the period after Clausewitz up to the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871. Colonel Wilhelm v. Scherf ruled more or less out culmination to favour the vigour attack when he edited and introduced the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of *Vom Kriege* 1880.

<sup>1054</sup> Clausewitz [Spring to December 1824], "*3tes Kapitel Verlauf des Feldzugs*", *Schriften* (1990), 807-919, cf. 818, 831

<sup>1055</sup> See Clausewitz [1824-25], 'Fortsetzung [Das Gefecht Überhaupt]', *Vom Kriege* 4:4, 427-35, cf. 430; Clausewitz [Summer 1824-25], 'Strategische Mittel, den Sieg zu Benutzen', *Vom Kriege* 4:12, 474-85, cf. 474

Daun during the Seven Years' War stopped easily. Therefore it was foolish to confront a Bonaparte with the same methods as those one used on a Daun.

This illustrated indeed the dangers of abstracting military art too far. Strategic combinations *per se*, for Clausewitz *Kriegskunst* could only contribute to the outcome when the fear of the future was little and a state of equilibrium ruled between the belligerents. Otherwise actual tactical success was theoretically the single cause of decision and effective means for strategy. This was a firm counterargument to older theory, which had projected the primacy of higher clever artistic combinations as a substitute for real tactical success in combat.

The 'bloodless solution' and 'non-decision' was the failure of attack when the attacker retreated without accomplishing a decision. Older theory had projected this situation as examples of higher military art, a serious mistake in Clausewitz's opinion. The inactivity of attack in a theatre of war was mostly due to '*politischen Verhältnisse*', political conditions.<sup>1056</sup> Clausewitz had at this point of analysis tentatively adopted the theoretical viewpoint that war is the continuation of *Politik* in a broader sense, to think strategy properly. The underpinning political conditions and the conflict determined the character of war, which influenced the strategist's way of thinking. This was later elaborated in Book 2.

The general conditions wherefrom a war arises also determine its character and constitute its natural footing; we will say more about this in a moment related to the war plan. However these general conditions have made most war into a *Halbdinge* [a half-thing, without a clear entity], where real enmity must wind its way through such a conflict of relationships that only a very weak [warlike] element remained. This must naturally show itself most frequently and strongest in attack, on the side of positive action. So it is no miracle indeed, when such a breathless [spiritless] hectic attack can be halted through the pressure of a finger. Against an exhausted [party] paralysed by a thousand considerations and hardly any decisions, the pretence of resistance is often enough. It is not the many impregnable positions everywhere, nor the fear of the dark mountains that embeds the theatre of war...; these things are not the cause of the defender's real, bloodless, success, it is instead the weakness of will, with which the attacker sets his hesitant foot.<sup>1057</sup>

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<sup>1056</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Widerstandsarten', *Vom Kriege* 6:8, 647-64, cf. 658-59

<sup>1057</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Widerstandsarten', *Vom Kriege* 6:8, 647-64, cf. 659-60. 'Die allgemeinen Verhältnisse, aus denen ein Krieg hervorgeht und die natürlich seine Grundlage ausmachen, bestimmen auch seinen Charakter; wir werden davon in der Folge beim Kriegsplan mehr zu sagen haben. Diese allgemeinen Verhältnisse aber haben die meisten Kriege zu einem Halbdinge gemacht, wo die eigentliche Feindschaft sich durch einen solchen Konflikt von Beziehungen winden mußte, daß sie nur ein sehr schwaches Element blieb. Dies muß sich natürlich beim Angriff, *auf dessen Seite sich das positive Handeln findet*, am meisten und stärksten zeigen. So ist es denn freilich kein Wunder, wenn ein solcher atemloser, hektischer Angriff durch den Druck eines Fingers zum Stillstand gebracht werden konnte. Gegen einen matten, von tausend Rücksichten gelähmten, kaum noch vorhandenen Entschluß ist oft der Schein eines Widerstandes genug. Es ist nicht die große Anzahl unangreifbarer Stellungen,

The weakening of attack dwelt foremost in political conditions and political intentions of the warring states – the lack of will. Clausewitz recognized the major cause of non-success in the fear of the enemy's sword, and this was the opposite of the general view suggesting many other reasons. Real political motives behind action and abandoning action were sensitive to disclosure, even sometimes to the commander. This had induced many false ideas in the literature, according to Clausewitz, which had been used to develop the many stand-alone strategic systems into faulty military ideals. It was however essential for the commander to understand the complex web of political realities to think strategy right, to avoid a naïve military understanding of war.

Clausewitz had taken the standpoint to view the history of war greatly simplified, as a '*Angriffs- und Verteidigungsapparat*', a device of attack and defence, which gave clarity to the basic conditions and relations. He was now thinking strategy from the viewpoint of war as a continuation of *Politik* in a broader sense, even if he had not coined the phrase yet. A set of texts continued to elaborate different forms and aspects of defence, such as the defensive battle, fortresses, defensive positions, fixed positions and fortified camps, flank positions, mountain defence, defence of rivers, defence of morass and flooding, defence of wooded areas, and the cordon.<sup>1058</sup>

He returned once more for explicit criticism of older theory after the aspects to be integrated and thought of in the defensive plan had been displayed. Clausewitz reviewed the 'key to the country' and the 'flank-effect', two pet concepts or showpieces, of older theory to pin down the way to success. The control of terrain-points had in older theory been given the imaginary potency of being generally decisive of a whole enterprise. This had induced false beliefs such as that a piece of land could be the key to a country. Clausewitz refuted and ridiculed these falsehoods and compared military worship to the Kabala, Jewish mysticism, a magic that admitted a secret science. Lloyd was once more pinpointed as the starting point for this evil discourse. Although Bonaparte had already and clearly disproved these military ideas around 1800 their magic continued to attract via books, seducing Prussia's military elite like the Kabala.

Certain terrain points such as major road junctions were of course important to Clausewitz, but not decisive *per se*. His reasoning can be compared to his theatre estimate made in Koblenz, where Cologne was picked as the cornerstone for the

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welche sich überall finden, nicht die Fruchtbarkeit der dunklen Gebirgsmassen, welche sich über das Kriegstheater hinlagern, oder des breiten Stromes, der es durchzieht, nicht die Leichtigkeit, durch gewisse Zusammenstellungen der Gefechte den Muskel, der den Stoß gegen uns ausführen soll, wirklich zu lähmen; - diese Dinge sind nicht die Ursache des häufigen Erfolges, den der Verteidiger auf unblutigem Wege hat, sondern es ist die Schwäche des Willens, womit der Angreifende den zögernden Fuß vorsetzt.'

<sup>1058</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Die Verteidigungsschlacht, *Vom Kriege* 6:9, 665-69; 'Festungen', *Vom Kriege* 6:10-11, 670-88; 'Defensivstellung', *Vom Kriege* 6:12, 689-95; 'Feste Stellungen und Verschanzte Lager', *Vom Kriege* 6:13, 696-703; 'Flankenstellung', *Vom Kriege* 6:14, 704-06; 'Gebirgsverteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 6:15-17, 707-30; 'Verteidigung von Strömen und Flüssen, *Vom Kriege* 6:18-19, 731-50; 'A. Verteidigung von Morästen & Überschwemmung', *Vom Kriege* 6:20, 752-58; 'Verteidigung von Wäldern', *Vom Kriege* 6:21, 759-60; 'Der Kordon', *Vom Kriege* 6:22, 761-65

defence of the Rhine. The terminology used in this 'geological discourse' on the *Kriegskunst* included the coining of many points, such as: *Straßenpunkt* (road points) and *Wasserteilungspunkt* (water dividing points).<sup>1059</sup> These might have influenced Clausewitz's development of *Kulmionationspunkt* and *Schwerpunkt* which instead related solely to the military-political potency of action.

He pointed to the false interpretations of Prussia's campaigns of 1793-1794 by Massenbach and Grawert, which had proffered 'theoretical keys' to success.<sup>1060</sup> These accounts were however not just harmless 'windmills', because their viewpoints had underlain strategic thought for the conduct of the 1814 campaign with 200,000 soldiers. This once more underlines his practical motives for writing. The flank effect was of more interest and elaborated much further. To hit the enemy in the rear *per se* as a general approach was not, for Clausewitz, a useful way of thinking; instead, the value depended on the situation, as did most similar military ideas. Clausewitz made a basic distinction between effects on the lines of communication and lines of retreat. To understand front and rear may seem easy on paper, but not so easy in reality with incomplete information.

The making of a strategic flank effect depended on many specific circumstances: this Clausewitz developed to contradict older theory. He referred to situations where the attacker was halted for other reasons than defensive combat, such as vast space and political conditions. The flank effect was most effectively developed in defence towards the end of a campaign, when the people were armed and the army had retreated to the interior. In addition, *Parteigänger*, independent small forces of light infantry, were put forward as suitable for this type of effect. Larger enterprises to achieve a flank effect by envelopment (*Umfassung*) and longer envelopment (*Umgehen*) were always vulnerable, especially for an attacker in hostile territory. The *Grundsatz* stipulating a view of the flank effect not *per se* but as particular and relative in a situation was finally answered:

It is here we must have our eyes on the previously stipulated *Grundsatz*; what should be effective in the rear cannot be employed in the front; that is to say, operations in the rear and flank are not a force multiplier *per se*, only an assignment raised to higher powers by the stimulus of danger. Any resistance with the sword that is not direct and simple tends to raise effect at the cost of security. Whatever effect [there is] in the flank belongs to this category, be it with joint forces or from many sides separated by enveloping forces.<sup>1061</sup>

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<sup>1059</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Schlüssel des Landes', *Vom Kriege* 6:23, 766-70

<sup>1060</sup> See J.A.R v.Grawert, *Ausführliche Beschreibung der Schlacht bei Pirmasenz den 14. September 1793 in drei Abschnitten nebst einem Bataillen-Plan und dazu gehöriger General - Charte* (Potsdam: Horvath, 1796); A.L. v. Massenbach, *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Kriegsschauplatzes zwischen dem Rhein, der Nahe und der Mosel nebst Betrachtung über einige der merkwürdigsten Begebenheiten, welche sich auch auf diesem Kriegsschauplatz in den Jahren 1793 und 1794 ereignet haben* (Berlin: Unger, 1798/99)

<sup>1061</sup> Clausewitz [1826-Spring 1827], 'Flankenwirkung', *Vom Kriege* 6:24, 771-83, cf. 779. 'Hier ist es, wo wir den gleich anfangs aufgestellten Grundsatz vorzüglich im Auge haben müssen,

The text on flank effect reflected Clausewitz's level of analytical sophistication in 1826-1827. He stipulated a simple precept and moved confidently via experience to a precise but complex answer, elastic to embrace and inform practice. This often included the intention to smash a particularly prevalent standpoint in military literature. He continued with the retreat into the interior as an immediate way of resistance, closely related to utilizing the flank effect. The enemy could be defeated by the sword or by his own efforts. 'Anyone proceeding in attack will be weakened by this proceeding in fighting power'.<sup>1062</sup> The epitome in mind was of course Russia in 1812. Deliberate retreat avoiding battle preserved fighting power better than retreating after losing a battle. Continued but adjusted resistance to keep the equilibrium of fighting fluid would wear down enemy fighting power.

To retreat while being pursued after a lost battle with broken courage was of course very different. In consequence the practical problems and utility of retreat were different; the value arose in situations similar to the flank effect. This type of confluence of moral and physical power was very typical of Clausewitz's analytical manner, his continual refutation of insensitive theoretical patterns of military art in older theory.<sup>1063</sup> Clausewitz employed the result from his 1824 analysis of the Russian campaign to depict the diminishing effect on the attacker.

Bonaparte's '*Zentrum*' had at Witbesk been 250,000 soldiers, at Smolensk 182,000 and at Borodino 120,000. At this place 90 *Meilen* from the border the Russian '*Zentrum*' was in equilibrium with the French, but it was not before Moscow that the Russians had attained the decisive superiority that induced an *Umschlag*, a turn of the tide in terms of equilibrium.<sup>1064</sup> The example had of course no comparison. The dimensions of Russia had no European equivalent, nor had Bonaparte's army of 1812. It took almost the distance to Moscow to change the balance of power in favour of the retreating Russian Army. Clausewitz suggested this might be possible to achieve in much smaller circumstances, which became an important way of resistance to change the balance of power in strategic defence. The absence of decision in trying to accomplish an overreaching political purpose illuminated the viability of culmination point, not just in

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daß, was hinten wirken soll, nicht vorn gebraucht werden kann, daß also die Wirkung von hinten oder von der Seite an sich nicht als eine Multiplikation der Kräfte, sondern nur als eine potenzierte Verwendung derselben betrachtet werden muß; potenziert von seiten des Erfolges, aber auch potenziert von seiten der Gefahr. Jeder Widerstand durch das Schwert, der nicht ein gerader und einfacher ist, hat die Tendenz, die Wirkung auf Kosten der Sicherheit zu erhöhen. Eine Wirkung von der Seite, sei es mit vereinigter Macht oder von mehreren Seiten mit getrennter und umfassender Macht, gehört in diese Kategorie.'

<sup>1062</sup> Clausewitz [1826-Spring 1827], 'Rückzug in das Innere des Landes', *Vom Kriege* 6:25, 784-98, cf. 784. 'Jeder im Angriff Vortschreitende wird in seiner Streitkraft durch dieses Vortschreiten geschwächt...'

<sup>1063</sup> See Book 2 on theory and Book 3 on strategy in general.

<sup>1064</sup> '*Meilen*' was an old term for long distances. One *Meile* was about 12000 steps or 2 hours marsch. The exact value differed however between countries. See '*Meilen*' in *Brockhaus Bilder-Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol 3 (Leipzig: 1839), 100-101 60 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20000844314> accessed 29 March 2012

the case of Moscow. This further illustrates that Clausewitz wrote with Prussia foremost in mind:

Everywhere a strategic attack without decisive battle fails by the pure difficulties to simply exist, and the advance is forced into a sometimes more and sometime less destructive withdrawal the main effects of this mode of resistance have obtained, which may also have been accompanied by modified circumstances. Friedrich the Great's campaign in Moravia in 1742, in Bohemia in 1744, the French Campaign in Austria and Bohemia in 1743, the campaign in France 1792 by the Duke of Brunswick, Masséna's winter campaign from 1810 to 1811 in Portugal, these examples all show this on much smaller scales and circumstances; there are also numerous examples of fragmentary effect according to this way, where the entire success relied not on the principle we assert here but parts must be attributed, which we will not go into here, however, because that would require a longer development of conditions that would take us too far. In Russia and the other cases adduced the turn of the tide [*Umschwung*] occurred without a successful battle at the culmination point providing a decision; but when such effect is not to be expected, it remains anyway a matter of reasonable importance because this mode can induce a correlation of forces that makes victory possible, and this victory as a first blow can induce movement; its perishable effects can be better fostered by the laws of thought in the case.<sup>1065</sup>

Arming the populace, *Volksbewaffnung*, was dear to Clausewitz, both politically and militarily. The institution had its supporters as well as enemies, who for political reasons feared it would be a platform for revolution and anarchy. As a part of defence, however, the concept would only be analysed from a military point of view, as a means of fighting the enemy (*Kampfmittel*).<sup>1066</sup> Arming the people was viewed as the

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<sup>1065</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Rückzug in das Innere des Landes', *Vom Kriege* 6:25, 784-98, cf. 797-98. 'Überall, wo ein strategischer Angriff ohne Schlachtentscheidung an den bloßen Schwierigkeiten des Daseins gescheitert und der Vorgezogene zu einem bald mehr, bald weniger zerstörenden Rückzug gezwungen gewesen ist, hat die Hauptbedingung und Hauptwirkung dieser Widerstandsart stattgefunden, von welchen modifizierenden Umständen sie auch sonst begleitet gewesen sein mag. Friedrichs des Großen Feldzug von 1742 in Mähren, von 1744 in Böhmen, der französische Feldzug von 1743 in Österreich und Böhmen, des Herzogs von Braunschweig Feldzug von 1792 in Frankreich, Massénas Winterfeldzug von 1810 auf 1811 in Portugal sind Beispiele, die ähnliche Fälle, aber in viel geringeren Dimensionen und Verhältnissen zeigen; außerdem aber gibt es noch eine Unzahl fragmentarischer Wirkungen der Art, wo nicht der ganze Erfolg, aber wohl ein Teil desselben dem Prinzip, welches wir hier geltend machen, zugeschrieben werden muß, die wir aber nicht anführen, weil eine Entwicklung der Verhältnisse dabei nötig wäre, die uns hier zu weit führen würde. In Rußland und den anderen angeführten Fällen ist der Umschwung erfolgt, ohne daß eine glückliche Schlacht am Kulminationspunkt die Entscheidung gegeben; aber wo eine solche Wirkung auch nicht zu erwarten ist, bleibt es schon ein Gegenstand von hinreichender Wichtigkeit, durch diese Widerstandsart ein Machtverhältnis herbeizuführen, welches den Sieg möglich macht, und durch diesen Sieg wie durch einen ersten Stoß eine Bewegung zu veranlassen, die sich dann in ihren verderblichen Wirkungen nach den Gesetzen des Falles zu vergrößern pflegt.'

<sup>1066</sup> Compare Clausewitz's political view of *Landwehr* in 1819-20 described earlier.

breakthrough of the warlike element into modern times through the old artistic compound (*künstliche Umwallung*), an expansion and strengthening of the process of fermentation known as war.

The system of requisition made war swell up. The military utility of armed people was not to be found in the effect of concentrated large battles, instead in the process of vaporisation (*Verdampfungsprozeß*) caused by space. The more contact between enemy forces and the surface, i.e. the larger the enemy footprint by spreading and extending forces, the more would the effect of a population in arms become. The armed population was suitable to destroy the basic footholds for the enemy.

The citizen soldier was projected in democratic terms with equal possibility and responsibility regardless of social class. The *Landsturm* and militias should not grind the core of enemy power, should not target the core of the main force, but instead mainly the outskirts. This type of unit should be employed in areas surrounding the theatre of war, to facilitate effects that brought the enemy closer to the culmination point. *Volkskrieg* was to be like a 'foggy and cloudlike being' (*Nebel- und wolkenartiges Wesen*). It should never concretize into a physical body available for concentrated destruction that could lead to moral disintegration.<sup>1067</sup> This concluded Clausewitz's exposé of important defensive means and he continued with the defence of a theatre of war by summarising the political scope of the 'attack-defence device'.

Defence as the strongest form of fighting was used to spare one's fighting power and annihilate the enemy's. Victory was in that sense the aim of fighting but not the final purpose. 'The preservation of one's state and the overthrow of the enemy state is this purpose, and that is in a word, the intentional peace that equals and ends this conflict in a common result.'<sup>1068</sup> The relation of the hostile state to the war was first to be found in the fighting force, its surface, but also in individual relations such as political conditions, both domestic and foreign.

Clausewitz observed the reciprocity of land and fighting power, giving primacy to the annihilation of the latter. If the whole fighting force was united in one army then the outcome of one combat would decide the war. The deviation from this simple example displayed to Clausewitz the '*die Unzulänglichkeit des Sieges*', inadequacy of victory, its irregular effective sphere discussed several times above.

A victory would provide a different amount of coercive power over the enemy state, thus over its fighting force and its surface. Were all parts torn away by the same movement, such victory would then accomplish all the necessary with no need to divide the force. If the victory did not exert that power one had to divide the forces and defend each part. The effect of all-encompassing power was most possible to achieve against a small armed force and a small, narrow state, in Clausewitz's opinion. The effective sphere of victory depended on the size of victory. It was the mass or

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<sup>1067</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Volksbewaffnung', *Vom Kriege* 6:26, 799-806

<sup>1068</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters', *Vom Kriege* 6:27, 807-11, cf. 808. 'Die Erhaltung des eigenen Staates und die Niederwerfung des feindlichen ist dieser Zweck, und wieder mit einem Wort: der beabsichtigte Friede, weil in ihm sich dieser Konflikt ausgleicht und in ein gemeinschaftliches Resultat endigt.'

proportion of defeated forces, which led Clausewitz to an analogy with the effect of a *Schwerpunkt* in mechanical science:<sup>1069</sup>

So as the *Schwerpunkt* is always situated where most of the mass is close together and as every blow against the weight of a *Schwerpunkt* is the most effective, the remoter and stronger will the obtained power of a blow from a *Schwerpunkt* be, so also in war. The fighting forces of every belligerent, a single state or a coalition of states, have a certain unity and, through this, coherence; however where coherence is present there the analogy of *Schwerpunkt* is valid. Certain *Schwerpunkte* are thus present in these fighting forces, whose movement and direction dominate other points, and these *Schwerpunkte* are situated where the bulk of fighting forces are together.<sup>1070</sup>

But, Clausewitz also observed the clear risk of '*Luftstoß*', punching the air, from this approach. This was a waste of power since efficiency depended on the context and the linking of the parties involved. The risk of 'air punching' was also present in the study of the 1815 campaign made just before the clarification of the device.<sup>1071</sup> To distinguish the '*Centra gravitatis*' of enemy power was a main act of strategic judgement. Clausewitz stressed that this was not a new way of thinking, instead a procedure and idea perfectly clear to commanders in all times.

A defence of a theatre of war, irrespective of size, could in Clausewitz's opinion be reduced to one *Schwerpunkt* at which to impose a decision and become victor. Defence was divided into two components, the awaiting and the decision, where the former was important but not the perfection of defence itself since it would not necessarily break enemy power. The *Schwerpunkt* of opposing forces would only come into effect if both parties were ready to fight for a decision. A main battle in a theatre of war was consequently the thrust of a *Schwerpunkt* against a *Schwerpunkt*.

Clausewitz used the 1806 campaign to illustrate some problems of defence, referring to an area he visited in the summer of 1825. Prussia had from the outset in fact a better position in relation to the narrow space Bonaparte had to use. Before the battle the Prussian high command had identified the most important courses of action to use

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<sup>1069</sup> Cf. Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Kriegsplan, Wenn Niederwerfung des Feindes das Ziel ist', *Vom Kriege* 8:9, 1009-1040

<sup>1070</sup> Clausewitz 1826-[spring 1827], 'Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters', *Vom Kriege* 6:27, 807-11, cf. 809-10. 'So wie sich der Schwerpunkt immer da findet, wo die meiste Masse beisammen ist, und wie jeder Stoß gegen den Schwerpunkt der Last am wirksamsten ist, wie ferner der stärkste Stoß mit dem Schwerpunkt der Kraft erhalten wird, so ist es auch im Kriege. Die Streitkräfte jedes Kriegführenden, sei es ein einzelner Staat oder ein Bündnis von Staaten, haben eine gewisse Einheit und durch diese Zusammenhang; wo aber Zusammenhang ist, da treten die Analogien des Schwerpunktes ein. Es gibt also in diesen Streitkräften gewisse Schwerpunkte, deren Bewegung und Richtung über die anderen Punkte entscheidet, und diese Schwerpunkte finden sich da, wo die meisten Streitkräfte beisammen sind.'

<sup>1071</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118, cf. 955



to the greatest advantage, but could not decide in time and instead slipped into Bonaparte's battle. Clausewitz continued to discuss whether one should fight in front or behind lines of fortification and other aspects of conducting defence in a strategic sense.<sup>1072</sup>

The next aspect of theatre defence was 'successive resistance' related to the strategic *Grundsatz* of simultaneous use of all forces stipulated in Book 3. The effective sphere of offensive victory was defined as a timely product of moral and physical superiority achieved, and then exhausted differently in time and space. The place of combat and victory, early or late in the campaign, did not matter *per se*. The superiority of attacker was anyway consumed by the use of fighting forces to cover the cost of the theatre's friction and fighting combats. A defensive strategy could consequently employ successive uses of power for utilizing the theatre to restore equilibrium and bring the attacker to a standstill.<sup>1073</sup> This contradicted his earlier theoretical standpoint.

The final text on the concept of defence elaborated the defence of a theatre when a decision was not deliberately sought.<sup>1074</sup> Clausewitz tried to conclude his way of thinking defensive strategy and to propound an answer to the evident problem that an offensive enterprise can defeat itself. This text was quite long and probably written not long before the *Nachricht* in July 1827, which finally spelled out the need for a new *Grundvorstellung*. The text was obviously very important to Clausewitz's theoretical inclusion of the element of *Politik* in strategy, but is hardly observed in the literature.

Clausewitz put forward the contradiction as a situation where none of the warring parties had a positive will to attack. A real aggressor was more or less absent, which turned the situation into a double-sided defence. This situation actually reflected most wars, which made the few striving for a decision along the lines of the *Urbestimmung* and the *Grundvorstellung* appear as exceptions from the rule. The problem of rule and exception in strategy had already been discussed in 1817. Clausewitz pointed out the difficulty of capturing real war: it was always somewhere between. The characteristic of real war appeared always in the modifications of the 'absolute form' of war, which clearly indicated Clausewitz's impending shift of vantage point and ontology of the warlike element.<sup>1075</sup>

It seems that he had reconsidered the prospect of decision. Waiting was once more illuminated by the moral maxim '*beati sunt possidentes*', blessed are the haves, and was put forward as a powerful argument for doing nothing. He further pointed to the relative importance of combat, newly viewed as absolute (cf. Book 4). An attacker driven by a tiny will could be brought to standstill by outposts and weaker defensive arrangements. To lose a few outposts was still a good economy in fighting a restrained

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<sup>1072</sup> Clausewitz [1826- spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung [Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters]', *Vom Kriege* 6:28, 812-28

<sup>1073</sup> Clausewitz [1826- spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Sukzessiver Widerstand [Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters]', *Vom Kriege* 6:29, 829-32

<sup>1074</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters, wenn keine Entscheidung gesucht wird', *Vom Kriege* 6:30, 833-62

<sup>1075</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters, wenn keine Entscheidung gesucht wird', *Vom Kriege* 6:30, 833-62, cf.834

war, not a matter of the life and death of the state. This way of war however brought importance to the control of crucial terrain.

Clausewitz elaborated limited defence, for example a position of 10,000 soldiers against 30,000, to use eventually merely for trading a strip of land. This way had often been used to satisfy personal ego and to win a small trophy. He referred to Colonel Grawert, who had been the spirit of the General Staff in the early 1790s as the man of 'mountains and passes'; in addition to General Brunswick and General Möllendorf as exponents of this way.<sup>1076</sup>

In this period, to better understand limited aim, Clausewitz made a strategic study of Brunswick's 1787 campaign in the Netherlands.<sup>1077</sup> This further indicates his desire to cover better the awkward mismatch between the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element and realities, to more clearly elaborate rule and exception. This period of writing clearly explained the weakness of attack but also the incomplete power of defending by just waiting. Clausewitz returned repeatedly to Friedrich's strategy, often apparently offensive, but clearly limited to fulfilling a defensive purpose against numerically superior but cautious enemies such as the Austrian commander, Daun. This type of effort (*Bestrebung*) was restrained by many inner counterweights and basically often just mutual observation. The difference between attack and defence disappeared even more in this type of strategic situation.<sup>1078</sup>

To Clausewitz this appeared as a true strategic manoeuvring (*strategisches Manövrieren*) because the political purpose and situation did not allow any great decisions. Clausewitz dedicated a chapter in the book on attack to strategic manoeuvring, which he regarded as a '*gleichgewichtiges Spiel der Kräfte*', thus as a play of forces in equilibrium. This type of effort was not driven by any great ambitious purpose nor had it the warlike energy and power to move the whole. The small-scale action and minor cost subjected fighting to the skill of the commanders, more clearly supplemented by fortune and chance. That was war as a true game.

The vague situation made the whole even more complicated, but allowed greater importance to the commander's intelligent calculus. A commander capable of intelligent calculation was hardly the same type of person as the 'warlike virtuoso' (*kriegerische Virtuosität*), who dominated in circumstances of large-scale decision, hence following the warlike element. Older theory had put a false value on intelligent calculation and made it equal to the whole intellectual profile of the commander. The absence of success had been explained by the commander's shortcomings in intelligent calculation. This was a mistake that neglected the other moral virtues such as courage and resolution needed to dominate really dangerous circumstances.

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<sup>1076</sup> Clausewitz [1826 - spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters, wenn keine Entscheidung gesucht wird', *Vom Kriege* 6:30, 833-62, cf.842

<sup>1077</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Der Feldzug des Herzogs von Braunschweig gegen die Holländer 1787', *Werke* 10/10 (1837), 252- 320

<sup>1078</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters, wenn keine Entscheidung gesucht wird', *Vom Kriege* 6:30, 833-62, cf.852-53

Clausewitz continued to elaborate mistakes in conceptualizing change that induced conceptual perplexity. Most wars between civilized states had taken the form of mutual observation rather than a form driven by the purpose of overthrow. Consequently, most campaigns had had the character of strategic manoeuvring. Great Captains such as Turenne and Montecuccoli became famous for their *Manövrierkunst*, their art of manoeuvre. This had induced the view that the *Kriegskunst* could be perfected by study in the world of theory. This view was destroyed by the Revolutionary Wars as the raw and the naturalistic, which was perfected as a method by Bonaparte.

One current group that thought militarily according to the old paradigm believed one could discover great new secret ideas in Napoleon's success. This implied that the old way of war was gone forever, which was not true. Another group argued that the recent cruel wars were just an abnormal decline in the *Kriegskunst*. They stubbornly suggested the play of forces in equilibrium was to be considered as the only norm for military education, a view Clausewitz regarded as short on logic and philosophy. He now actually refuted both ways, since war had been turned into a locked model. These views neglected the fact that war is a broader political fermentation process (*Gärungsprozess*), consequently:

So we confess that we do not know how to stipulate any *Grundsätze*, rules or methods in this chapter, because history does not offer any, and one encounters peculiarities that are indeed impossible to understand in almost every single case, actually through fickleness surprising [*Wunderlichkeit* cf. the later description of the trinity as '*wunderlich*']. But the study of history also in these circumstances is anyway not without utility. Where no system is present, where there is no device of truth, there is however one truth and this consists mostly of a trained judgement [*Urteil*] and tact [*Takt*] of long experience. However, history does not provide any formulas here [close to equilibrium], so there is, as everywhere, training of judgement. We would put forward only one *Grundsatz* embracing the whole, or even more, we would put the ruling, natural precondition for everything said here, still in the form of an independent *Grundsatz*, anew and vividly before our eyes. All means indicated here have only a relative value. They are all under a court injunction [*Gerichtsbann* – cf. for Clausewitz, the 'supreme court' of international politics was decision by arms] from a sort of incompetence by both parties; a higher law of thought [cf. *Höchstes Gesetz* as decision by arms - the highest law of strategic thought] rules over this region and this is a completely different world of appearance. The commander must never forget this, he must never move with imagined security in a narrow *Kreis* [intellectual circuit] as this would be something absolute; never regard the means he uses here as the imperative and only ones, and then also resort to them when he is already shivering at their inadequacy.<sup>1079</sup>

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<sup>1079</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Fortsetzung Verteidigung eines Kriegstheaters, wenn keine Entscheidung gesucht wird', *Vom Kriege* 6:30, 833-62, cf. 858-59. 'Wir bekennen also, daß wir in diesem Kapitel keine Grundsätze, Regeln oder Methoden anzugeben wissen, weil uns die Geschichte nichts dergleichen darbietet und man dagegen fast in jedem einzelnen Moment auf Eigentümlichkeiten stößt, die sehr häufig ganz unverständlich sind, oft sogar durch

Note that Clausewitz confessed here his dilemma, how to distil strategic theory close to equilibrium, thus of tiny will and little warlike energy. At this level of tension there was no theoretical wisdom at hand; instead war was for strategy more a matter of chance and timely intelligent calculation. This conclusion faintly outlined his immanent solution to stipulate the vantage point of strategy that war should be thought of as a continuation of *Politik* in the broader sense. It also clearly displays Clausewitz's view of the limits of strategic theory when war is thought of as an act of force. Experience indicated that most wars were driven by limited aims, later approximated to 49 out of 50, but occasionally political fermentation in the underpinning conflict made war, or more precisely the warlike element, swell up, which allowed far-reaching aims. These wars of brutal decision were much easier to conceptualize and embrace in *Grundsätze* than wars of strategic manoeuvring.

Clausewitz's practical motive and scope is indeed clear. To present more clearly his standpoint between the world of concepts and the real world a set of examples was elaborated. Clausewitz projected 1792 as one of the greatest mistakes ever, an example of a really bad decision as a yardstick of action. The belief that a small auxiliary force would be able to turn around the French roller fuelled by political fanaticism was indeed a great basic mistake not spoken of in military discourse. This had also led to years of defeat. The powerful attacks of the French revolutionaries were countered by petty systems of position and strategic manoeuvring. The political disagreement between Prussia and Austria had led to the foolish evacuation of Belgium and the Netherlands. The poverty of Austrian military-political understanding to recognize the rise of Bonaparte in the sequence of events was illustrated by pinpointing single crucial events such as Lodi and Montenotte in 1796.

But even the emperor, 'the god of war', had occasionally suffered from poor strategic judgement as well, and difficulties to recognize the true yardstick for action. He had for example in 1813 underestimated Blücher's enterprising spirit, the hate that had fuelled the fighting against his power as well as the small forces of Prussia and Sweden. The discussion of poor intellectual yardsticks (*Maßstab*) for proper strategic thought ended Book 6 and the chapter on the defence of a war theatre when no decision was looked for. He started work in 1826, or maybe 1825, to develop the reciprocity of defence and attack. Putting war into its two natural forms had induced the need to adjust the theoretical vantage point, thus to refine the ontology of the warlike element.

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Wunderlichkeit überraschen. Aber darum ist es nicht unnütz, die Geschichte auch in dieser Beziehung zu studieren. Wo es auch kein System, keinen Wahrheitsapparat gibt, da gibt es doch eine Wahrheit, und diese wird dann meistens nur durch ein geübtes Urtheil und den Takt einer langen Erfahrung gefunden. Gibt also die Geschichte hier keine Formeln, so gibt sie doch hier wie überall *Übung des Urtheils*. Nur einen das Ganze umfassenden Grundsatz wollen wir aufstellen, oder vielmehr wir wollen die natürliche Voraussetzung, unter welcher sich alles hier Gesagte befindet, noch in der Form eines eigenen Grundsatzes erneuern und lebendiger vor Augen stellen. Alle die hier angegebenen Mittel haben nur einen *relativen* Wert. Sie befinden sich alle in dem Gerichtsbann einer gewissen Unvermögenheit beider Teile; *über* dieser Region herrscht ein höheres Gesetz, und da ist eine ganze andere Welt der Erscheinungen. Nie darf der Feldherr das vergessen, nie sich mit eingebildeter Sicherheit in dem engen Kreis als in etwas *Absolutem* bewegen; nie die Mittel, welche er hier anwendet, für *die notwendigen, für die einzigen* halten und sie dann auch noch ergreifen, wenn er selbst schon vor ihrer Unzulänglichkeit zittere.'

Clausewitz was to make a note on this realisation in the very near future – the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827.

At least four strategic studies were made in the work of inventing and testing the 'device of defence and attack'. A simple aid to arranging them is that studies made before lacked the clear use of *Schwerpunkt* and *Kulminationspunkt* inherent in the device. As a first step Clausewitz studied the rise and downfall of Bonaparte. The essay on Bonaparte's breakthrough as a first-rate commander in the campaign in Italy in 1796 was outlined in 1825-1826 and expanded in 1828 into the larger study printed in *Werke* Vol 4.<sup>1080</sup> The letter to Gröben of 2 January 1829 cited earlier indicated this clearly.<sup>1081</sup>

The piece on the 1815 campaign was matter for a royal tutorial in 1828.<sup>1082</sup> This caused Kessel to suggest 1827 as the time when Clausewitz wrote this piece. Kessel was followed by Hahlweg and Paret.<sup>1083</sup> However this is incorrect, the piece on 1815 was clearly written before the 'device', so 1825-1826 seems more appropriate. The present work has previously demonstrated that the political side of strategy was clear and present even prior to the 'device'. This suggests, clearly, that the adjustment of the 1827 vantage point to include the element of *Politik* more explicitly was no big deal, contrary to interpretations that suggest it was a great insight, even causing the existence of 'two Clausewitzes' in a theoretical sense. The essay on the 1815 campaign supports this interpretation very clearly, if we just pick two examples:

First, Clausewitz's analysis of Bonaparte's strategic situation in spring 1815 clarified the emperor's political situation. Napoleon's intention was not to appear as a political and moral *aggressor*. Clausewitz elaborated the importance of Paris as the fulcrum (*Stützpunkt*) of Bonaparte's entire strategic work. The capital was as in most countries 'the knot of political dynamics' (*der Knoten politischer Partheiungen*) and essential to Bonaparte's ability to launch a campaign. To strike the root of political power was theoretically incorporated in the meaning of *Schwerpunkt* in the subsequent clarification of the 'device'.<sup>1084</sup> As Clausewitz was a student of Machiavelli he believed in the imperative of reliable armed forces for a prince to stay in political power, which explains his way of thinking strategy when the purpose was to overthrow the enemy.

Secondly, the influence of political conditions on the way to think strategy was elaborated to evaluate Bonaparte's strategic course of action. Aspects such as political climate and the prospect of a political future certainly influenced military thinking. To

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<sup>1080</sup> To my knowledge the initial essay on the Campaign 1796 does not exist any longer.

<sup>1081</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 2 January 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.421. 'it [the piece on the Campaign in Italy 1796] arose from a similar essay to the one on the campaign of 1815'.

<sup>1082</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118

<sup>1083</sup> Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.418; Hahlweg, 'Feldzug von 1815 Forbemerkung', *Schriften* (1990), 936-43; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 330. After 1825 was stated by Rothfels in Clausewitz, *Schriften* (1922), 217

<sup>1084</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118, cf. 954-58

explain Bonaparte's doubtful decision to fight the battle of Waterloo, he argued in a larger theoretical sense: 'Were it possible to limit true rules of the *Kriegskunst* derived only from objective conditions, one would one say here that it was against all rules to attempt this battle. Nor would the old critique have spoiled the opportunity to establish this; however the only thing to add is that genius cannot tie itself to rules.'<sup>1085</sup>

Clausewitz explained the emperor's final strategic behaviour and rationality at Waterloo as follows: 'Bonaparte balanced not only the crown of France but also several other crowns at the same time on the sharp point of his rapier.'<sup>1086</sup> Should he be measured according to the same yardstick as the cautious Turenne? This French marshal had in comparison only been a tiny cog in great state machinery, which had limited the scope of his strategic behaviour. One could hardly blame Bonaparte for seeking battle when he saw his enemies were closing in, endangering his entire political being. But his action prior to Waterloo was to be criticized: if he had completed a more conclusive victory over the Prussian army before taking on Wellington things might have worked out differently.

Bonaparte perhaps made his greatest mistake ever when he chose to fight at Waterloo. The decision to fight the superior enemy was made from political pride rather than shrewd strategy. He had no will to return as a refugee, but as a true hero who had shown no fear. One could of course choose to fight outnumbered for some reasons, but at Waterloo the emperor became an ordinary man who wasted the last cards of his power: 'Bonaparte appears at this point not as the reference of a great man but as trapped in mean bitterness like one cracked by an instrument and furiously throwing the disintegrated fragments to the ground.'<sup>1087</sup> Clausewitz's piece on Brunswick's strategy in the Netherlands in 1787 was also written at this time, as well as the revised version on the 1814 campaign in France.<sup>1088</sup>

The study entitled *Strategic Critique of the Campaign in France 1814* was made at the nexus of finalizing Book 6, sketching Book 7 and outlining Book 8. The piece was clearly written after the invention of the 'device of defence and attack'.<sup>1089</sup> Clausewitz had

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<sup>1085</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118, cf.1069. 'Wenn es möglich wäre die Regeln der Kriegskunst bloß auf objective Verhältnisse zu beschränken, so würde man hier sagen es war gegen alle Regel diese Schlacht zu versuchen. Die ältere Kritik würde auch nicht gessäumt haben dieß festzustellen, und nur hinzuzusetzen aber freilich kann sich das Genie nicht an die Regel binden.'

<sup>1086</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118, cf.1069 'Bonaparte, der auf der Spitze seines Degens nicht bloß die Krone von Frankreich balanzirte sondern eine Menge anderer Kronen zu gleicher Zeit,...'

<sup>1087</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26], 'Strategische Uebersicht des Feldzugs von 1815', *Schriften* (1990), 943-1118, cf.1071. 'Hier erscheint Bonaparte nicht in der Fassung eines großen Mannes sondern in einer fast gemeinen Erbitterung wie einer der ein Instrument zerbrochen hat und wüthend die Fragmente zertrümmend auf die Erde wirft.'

<sup>1088</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Der Feldzug des Herzogs von Braunschweig gegen die Holländer 1787', *Werke* 10/10, 252- 320

<sup>1089</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Strategische Kritik des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich', *Werke* 7/10 (1835), 357-470. The time of writing was wrongly interpreted to 1816 in Paret, *Clausewitz*

changed his title and working format from *Übersicht* to *Kritik*, i.e. from overview to critique - criticism, a term frequently used in old theory. It may indicate that the concept of theory was under scrutiny, which the impending revision of Book 2 would address. He introduced in *Strategic Critique* the concept culmination point of victory to further conceptualize a possible sphere of attack as the weaker form of war. This concept was part of the 'device' and developed in an unnumbered text incorporated at the end of Book 7.<sup>1090</sup>

The 1814 campaign was especially dear to him due to his own involvement. He had in 1814 advocated an all-out strategy to head for Paris to entirely defeat Bonaparte, and this he had communicated to Gneisenau as mentioned. This would have been a course of action contrary to Metternich's policy of reaching a state of negotiation with Bonaparte that framed the Allied strategy of limited aim. Blücher and Gneisenau had, anyway, chosen to pursue the all-out strategy, which had struck everyone with surprise. The study of the 1814 campaign seems to have been a test bed for the 'device', as suggested by the opening remark. Clausewitz explained that the swift warlike element intermingled with diplomacy, which also harmonised well with his impending adjustment of *Grundvortellung*.

The 1814 campaign in France is more suitable than others to make a clear example of strategic thinking. First it belonged to a period when the warlike element was being moved swiftly by its natural power and the action of the Allies was not free from diplomatic considerations, which like alien pieces weaken the swift fire, so however the entire view of a war's essence, and the purposes themselves, was not so entirely diplomatic as in most new wars before the French Revolution, because both parties were pursuing great purposes, and neither was thinking of outwitting the enemy [*Temporistren*] in the way one otherwise is accustomed to spending one's time in a civilised manner [the way that characterised the more diplomatic *Kriegskunst*].<sup>1091</sup>

Clausewitz's usual objection, that strategic reasoning lacked a firm point of view, was present in the Introduction. Strategic estimates were like a panorama with no

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and the State, 358-60. He followed Camererer, *Clausewitz*, 77. Paret revised his interpretation to early 1820s in Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, 205

<sup>1090</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Über den Kulminationspunkt des Sieges', *Vom Kriege*, 7:non-numbered text, 935-45

<sup>1091</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Strategische Kritik des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich', *Werke* 7/10 (1835), 357-470, cf 350. 'Der Feldzug von 1814 in Frankreich ist mehr als ein anderer geeignet das Strategische Denken an einem Beispiel klar zu machen. 1stes gehört er einer Periode an in welcher das kriegische Element sich rasch und mit einer seiner natürlichen Kraft bewegt, und wenn auch das Handeln der Allierten nicht frei ist von diplomatischen Rücksichten, die wie fremdartige Theile das rache Feuer schwächen, so ist doch die ganze Ansicht vom Wesen eines Krieges und von den Zwecken desselben nicht so durchaus diplomatisch wie in den meisten neueren Kriegen vor der französischen Revolution, denn beide Theile haben einen großen Zweck der sie treibt, und beide denken nicht an das gewisse Temporistren, womit man sonst auf eine anständige Weise die Zeit zu verbringen pflegte.'

beginning or end of *pro* and *contra* or *if* and *then*. Theory was explained not as about what he had thought, but as the way he had thought it through. The 1814 study examined for the first time the 'culmination point of victory' to depict the sphere of attack (*Angriffssphere*) and recognize the turning point of equilibrium (*Umschwung des Gleichgewichts*). Clausewitz argued that the culmination point had in 1814 been situated deep in France. The Allied attack had sought to defeat Bonaparte's army and conquer Paris as the root of political life (*Wurzelpunkt*). Paris was defined as the *Schwerpunkt* of the French theatre of war, which implied that the core of the French army would be found in that direction. This study was one of his best, displaying the range of interacting concepts in the 'device'.

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Chapter 11 has elaborated the problem Clausewitz encountered in conceptualizing the reciprocity of defence and attack, which was indicated in the 'undated note'. It was argued the note was written in 1826, or early 1827. Clausewitz's brainstorm of different principle approaches to conceptualize the war plan was explained. In addition, his solution to view the history of war as a device of attack and defence was clarified. The chapter noted his observation of the lack of warlike logic close to equilibrium in the midst of attack and defence. Further his observation of different political conditions for commanders, which influenced their possibilities of exercising command and think strategy. These insights were going to induce the adjustment of vantage point and the ontology of the warlike element, which occurred step-by-step in the subsequent process of transition.





## 12. THE TRANSITION

### PONDERING THE DEVICE IN CONTEXT

We will have to understand that war as it should be cannot be constructed out of the pure concept [cf. the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element], but from all alien matter that mixes with and starts to take his [warlike element's] place, all the natural heaviness and friction of the parts, the entire inconsistency, human indistinctness and half-heartedness; we must adopt the view that war and the *Gestalt* one gives him emanate directly from instant ideas, feelings and conditions: indeed we must concede if we want to stay entirely true that this was actually also the case when war had assumed his absolute *Gestalt*, namely under Bonaparte. Since we must do this we must admit that war does not arise and obtain his character from a finite levelling of the indefinite conditions he affects, but from a single one directly predominant among them [cf. the impending fickle trinity of tendencies in the revised *Grundvorstellung*], so it follows that he [war] rests upon a play of possibilities, probabilities, luck and misfortune, by which the strict logical consequence is often lost, and [war] is hence in general a very unkind, uncomfortable intellectual instrument; then it also follows that war may be a thing that can sometimes be more war, sometime less [cf. continuation of *Politik*].<sup>1092</sup>

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<sup>1092</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Absoluter Und Wirklicher Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 8:2, 952-55, cf. 954-55. 'Wir werden uns also dazu verstehen müssen, den Krieg, wie er sein soll, nicht aus seinem bloßen Begriff zu konstruieren, sondern allem Fremdartigen, was sich darin einmischt und daransetzt, seinen Platz zu lassen, aller natürlichen Schwere und Reibung der Teile, der ganzen Inkonsequenz, Unklarheit und Verzagtheit des menschlichen Geistes; wir werden die Ansicht fassen müssen, daß der Krieg und die Gestalt, welche man ihm gibt, hervorgeht aus augenblicklich vorhergehenden Ideen, Gefühlen und Verhältnissen, ja wir müssen, wenn wir ganz wahr sein wollen, einräumen, daß dies selbst der Fall gewesen ist, woder seine absolute Gestalt angenommen hat, nämlich unter Bonaparte. Müssen wir das, müssen wir zugeben, daß der Krieg entspringt und seine Gestalt erhält nicht aus einer endlichen Abgleichung aller unzähligen Verhältnisse, die er berührt, sondern aus einzelnen unter ihnen, die gerade vorherrschen, so folgt von selbst, daß er auf einem Spiel von Möglichkeiten, Wahrscheinlichkeiten, Glück und Unglück beruht, in dem sich die strenge logische Folgerung oft ganz verliert, und wobei sie überhaupt ein sehr unbehilfliches, unbequemes Instrument des Kopfes ist; auch folgt dann, daß der Krieg ein Ding sein kann, was bald mehr, bald weniger Krieg ist.'

This chapter elaborates the transition phase that took place in conceptualising attack and the war plan, preceding the revision of the *Grundvorstellung*. As the quote indicates, at this point Clausewitz turned around his analytical point of view from the *Urbestimmung* as a given natural conceptual logic of the warlike element modified in reality, to a view that argued war as the continuation of *Politik*, thus the product of broader conditions than any individual appearance. The unfolding of the concept of *Spannung* was here important for grasping different and pulsating warlike energy. This made war a 'very unkind, uncomfortable intellectual instrument' for strategic thought.

The chapter first analyses the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827, which included the explicit presentation of *Politik*, and secondly, Clausewitz's sketch of the concept of attack that included the device of *Kulminationspunkt*. He used this to further depict the inevitable apogee of extending the attack physically and morally to further clarify the strength of defence. The chapter ends with an analysis of the parts of Book 8 that preceded the revision of *Grundvorstellung*. The book on the concept of War Plan reflected the transition to a modified view of an initial hypothesis, natural to every intellectual work with a claim to sophistication.

### THE NACHRICHT OF 10 JULY 1827

Clausewitz stated in the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827 that the first six books were clear and tidied up into clean manuscripts.<sup>1093</sup> However, the content was described, humbly in the Romantic spirit and strife for perfection, as still a formless mass of texts that had to be reworked once more. The revision would adopt more clearly the *doppelte Art des Krieges*, i.e. the double way, or kind, of war, which would make all the ideas appear sharper and provide better direction, closer to practical usage. The work on developing defence and attack had forced him as mentioned earlier to modify the original theoretical approach, that the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element was reduced in real action by circumstances. On this modified way of thinking, the concept of war became two-fold for strategy, thus the inner truth or basic guiding logic was of two kinds for proper strategic thought.

The first type of *Vorstellung* was based on the *Grundvorstellung* following the *Urbestimmung*. The purpose was clarified as overthrowing an enemy (*der Zweck das Niederwerfen des Gegners*), thus abolishing (*vernichten*) his political existence or making him defenceless so as to force a dictated peace on him. The second type of *Vorstellung* was a smaller approach to fulfil limited political ambitions; to conquer a piece of land to use as trading goods in negotiating peace. Clausewitz was clear that the two ways of endeavour (*Bestrebungen*) had different natures although the border between them had indeed to be free and open. He wanted to avoid arbitrary boxes of strategic thought, instead to comprehend the conduct of war according to a fluid scale.<sup>1094</sup>

In this connection he stated the need to better spell out the necessary practical point of view: '*daß der Krieg nichts ist als die fortgesetzte Staatspolitik mit anderen Mitteln*',

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<sup>1093</sup> Clausewitz, 'Nachricht 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81

<sup>1094</sup> This can be compared to for example Jomini's extensive classification of different types of wars and also to contemporary boxes of different types of war.

that war is nothing but continuing state policy with other means. The point was thus to think strategy by viewing the concept of war, i.e. the warlike element, as a continuation of political conditions rather than as a distinct concept with stable internal logic; to bring better unity to the strategic viewpoint between tactics and *Politik*. As demonstrated the political purpose was conceptually outside the warlike act in Clausewitz's old *Grundvorstellung*. But his work on the 'device' had suggested that strategic thought really depended on broader political and moral conditions, as included in the contemporary meaning of 'continuation'.

A rework with these viewpoints in mind would clarify many weak points and close several theoretical gaps in the first six books written up to now. However, Clausewitz downplayed the importance of the improved point of view, which was nevertheless *most* important for Book 8 on the concept of war plan when the direction of a whole war was to be investigated. In addition the point of view to be developed in the first book had to improve the guiding *Grundvorstellung* of war, thus to set a proper basic tone for the other books. So the adjustment seems really to have been of no great importance for Clausewitz just then. To illustrate that the intimacy of *Politik* and *Kriegskunst* was nothing novel, we can compare the account of the political scientist Karl Pölit's 1826, which elaborated the European and American state-systems:

According to *Staatskunst* [statecraft] and diplomacy all battles as well as the entire war are just means to [political] purposes. The commanders serve statecraft; the more confidently they can command the means put in their hands. This happened with Bonaparte with prudence at the head of the army in Italy, with calculation and tact not yet seen in the modern European *Kriegskunst*, and least expected by a commander aged twenty-six heading an army suffering the most urgent needs.<sup>1095</sup>

This political perspective on the *Kriegskunst* in the ends-means relation had been intimate to Clausewitz since his military education in Berlin and present in his notes since 1804. He would in the following months actually take *Politik* a bit further into war and *Kriegskunst* for strategic thought and reflect on the theoretical consequences.

At this point he still missed the larger lineaments of war to make his ideas coherent. The individual chapters of Book 7 existed as sketches, but to be reworked with the new viewpoints in mind to serve as a norm for a complete revision. Some chapters of Book 8 also existed as drafts. Clausewitz's purpose with this book was to straighten out many of the wrinkles in the heads of statesmen and strategists, to make them see

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<sup>1095</sup> Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölit, *Die Staatensysteme Europa's und Amerika's seit dem Jahre 1783*, Vol 1 (Leipzig: Hinrichsche Buchhandlung, 1826), 347. 'Nach Staatskunst und Diplomatie sind alle Schlachten, so wie der ganze Krieg, nur Mittel zum Zwecke. Die Feldherrn dienen der Staatskunst, je sicher sie über das in ihre Hände gelegte Mittel gebieten. Dies geschah von Bonaparte an der Spitze des Heers von Italien mit einer Umsicht, einer Berechnung und einem Tacte, wie die neuuropäischen Kriegskunst noch nicht gesehen, und am wenigsten von einem sechs und zwanzigjährigen Feldherrn an der Spitze eines den dringendsten Bedürfnissen leidenden Heers erwartet hatte.'

strategic problems clearly; at least to show them what one really had to consider about making war.

If Book 8 was to contribute to clarifying his ideas and fixating the '*großen Lineamente des Kriegeres*', i.e. larger or major lineaments of war, then it would be easier to transfer this spirit of the text and missing feature into the reworking of the other six books. In the revision of Book 2 Clausewitz was to point to the roots of conflict, that is, the element of *Politik* in a broader sense, as the larger lineaments of war for strategic thought. Here in *Nachricht* he aptly concluded that his present work would evoke continual misunderstanding and much criticism if he passed away before a revision had been made. But he was sure a reader searching for truth would find his work fruitful anyway. Confidently, he saw in his work so far the potential of a theoretical revolution in the realm of strategy.<sup>1096</sup>

#### SKETCHING THE PROSPECT OF ATTACK TOWARDS THE CULMINATION POINT

The book on the concept of attack, *der Angriff*, was designated 'sketch'. This indicated a preliminary status of the 22 texts, at least as presented in print in 1834. These were apparently written as sketches along with Book 6 or just after its completion in 1827. The undated note had described Book 7 as 'future' with just some main ideas in place: 'The seventh Book should have contained the attack, whereof the main matters are outlined superficially.'<sup>1097</sup> The state of work in July 1827 was described as: 'the sketches for the single chapters exist already in rough draft.'<sup>1098</sup> These sketches were to be considered as a reflex to Book 6 and were to be revised according to the two new points of view explicated in the *Nachricht*, thus the double way of thinking war and thinking the conduct of war as a continuation of *Staatspolitik*. Clausewitz's purpose in revision was as already mentioned to make Book 7 the model or norm for the whole work.

The Introduction to Book 7 stated that the first chapter of defence caught the attack quite sufficiently as the '*Gegensatz*' of defence, thus as logical opposites to illuminate war as dialectics, as an oscillating totality in a larger perspective. He had in Book 6 reduced war to a 'device of attack and defence' to bring order to the variation appearing in the historical record. However this system of thought (*das Gedankensystem*) derived from conceptual analysis did not cover all aspects of attack and had to be supplemented, which would contribute to understanding defence even better.

The purpose was not to eliminate and evade all strong and positive aspects of defence in the manner of most '*Ingenieurlehrbücher*', books of military thought driven by the engineering principle of war. These had in Clausewitz's opinion the theoretical

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<sup>1096</sup> Clausewitz, '*Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81, cf 181

<sup>1097</sup> Clausewitz [1826-winter 1827], 'Undated note amended to *Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 181-83, cf. 181 'Das siebente Buch sollte den Angriff enthalten, wovon die Gegenstände flüchtig hingeworfen sind;'

<sup>1098</sup> Clausewitz, '*Nachricht* 10 July 1827', *Vom Kriege*, 179-81, cf. 180. 'die Skizzen der einzelnen Kapitel bereits entworfen sind'

tendency to propound unfailing means of attack against any form of defence, but: 'The defence has its strong and weak points; if the first are not too invincible, then they will anyway cost a disproportionate price, and this must remain true for every standpoint [on strategy], otherwise one will contradict oneself.'<sup>1099</sup>

Clausewitz continued to elaborate the nature of strategic attack in a manner similar to defence, as continual change and joining of defence and attack. The former was not just a deliberate principle but a necessary evil, which the decelerating weight (*retardierendes Gewicht*), the pure gravity, (*Schwere*) of the attacker brought forward. The weight of attack was its own evil and death principle, supporting the argument that defence was in itself the stronger form of war. If the attack was strong enough, however, it would of course overcome defence in general.

Note that he indicated here a new concept of culmination, the culmination point of victory, to indicate the possibility of failure even after victory. Every attack had to end in defence; sometimes in a good situation sometimes in a difficult one, which resembled Moscow in 1812.<sup>1100</sup> Clausewitz mentioned the habit of commanders of not deciding in detail on what to accomplish with a strategic attack; instead to wait and to see what the course of events offered. The course of attack often brought the attacker further than the original intention. To use a modern term a firm 'end-state' was not used. Consequently successful defence turned into attack and vice versa.<sup>1101</sup>

The next aspect was the diminishing power of attack, developed as one of the main matters of strategy. A set of political and military causes of this phenomenon was listed, such as; the purpose of conquering, securing the rear and lines of communication, casualties in all forms, distance to sources of replenishment, drop in effort and withdrawal of allies. Reasons for increasing the power of attack existed when the unequal natural strength in favour of defence was neutralized, foremost by the general offensive result. This was aggressive victory. Clausewitz noted the irrelevance of comparing general strengths; instead the correlation of forces had to be specific between the main forces or those at the decisive point. This was the geographical area selected to produce the greatest effect for the overarching purpose.<sup>1102</sup>

The success of an attack was the result of a present superiority in moral and physical forces. Some strategic attacks had had the power to produce advantages and peace negotiations directly, but this was mostly not the case. The power was often just enough to reach a point where peace could be awaited; beyond this point came the turn of the tide (*der Umschwung* or *der Rückschlag*). The power of such a boomerang effect was often much stronger, not least morally, than the initial power of attack. This strategic apogee of attack, the end of superiority, was the culmination point of attack

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<sup>1099</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Der Angriff in Beziehung auf die Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 7:1, 869-70, cf. 870 'Die Verteidigung hat ihre Stärken und Schwächen; sind die ersteren auch nicht unüberwindlich, so kosten sie doch einen unverhältnismäßigen Preis, und das muß von jedem Standpunkte aus wahr bleiben oder man widerspricht sich.'

<sup>1100</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Natur des strategischen Angriffs', *Vom Kriege* 7:2, 871-74

<sup>1101</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Vom Gegenstande des strategischen Angriffs', *Vom Kriege* 7:3, 875-76

<sup>1102</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Abnehmende Kraft des Angriffs', *Vom Kriege* 7:4, 877-78

in Clausewitz's device. He had up to now used the term just as 'culmination point', as in the chapter on the flank effect: 'Moscow the culmination point of the French line of enterprise'.<sup>1103</sup> In the book on attack he developed the concept further by distinguishing culmination further in terms of attack and victory.

The chapter on the culmination point of attack ended with a note in which Clausewitz clarified that the essay on the 'culmination point of victory' should be included in Book 3. In print in 1834 this essay was published as the last text of Book 7, as a non-numbered chapter. The reason was probably that Marie and her brother had not observed this note in preparing the first volume of *Werke* published in 1832, of which Book 3 was part. The essay on the culmination point of victory was somewhat longer but was constructed on the same ideas as the other texts regarding culmination. The victor was often not capable of completely overthrowing an adversary, hence 'culmination point of victory'. This was a matter most important for theory and the fulcrum of most campaign plans. Clausewitz elaborated in this text the causes of the strengthening as well as the weakening of an attacker's power in the course of events.

This text might have been part of Clausewitz's brainstorm to solve his problem of conceptualizing defence in 1826-1827. This interpretation is supported by his way of presenting, for example, the flank effect and increasing his range to the sources of support. But the text also propounded the change of political relations caused by victory, which could negate the effect for the victor by raising individual interests in play. This could cause new political constellations among victors, defeated and supporters. The removal of danger from the victor could in addition often cause atony (*der Erschlaffung*) as in muscle that has lost its strength. This rendered the victor incapable of utilizing victory and caused him to let the profitable moment of decision slip away.

The essay ended with a reflection on relations of time and power in the physical world. The power to maintain a physical body in a straight-up position during movement was slowly exhausted through use and overwhelmed when time was short. This law of the physical world was also a salient image of inner life. Anyone who had made up his mind for a certain direction found it difficult to comprehend and accept change. In a military sense, such predetermination could cause the enterprise to tip over the culmination point. The currents of movement (*Strom der Bewegung*) caused by the enterprise could easily bring the attacker over the point of equilibrium or line of culmination in spite of being energised by the moral vigour of attack. This proved the inner coherence of culmination; thus when the attacker was forced to switch into defence it indicated a new state of equilibrium.

It was important to recognise the culmination point in all types of campaign plan; for the attacker not to overstretch power and for the defender to exploit this true disadvantage of the attacker. A strategic estimate had to evaluate whether a hostile force would keep its solid core and increase its density after the first blow or disintegrate (*zerfallen*) as a 'Bolognese bottle' into dust, as soon as the surface was scratched. First, estimate the scope of weakening and paralysis of the enemy state

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<sup>1103</sup> Clausewitz [Spring 1827], 'Flankenwirkung', *Vom Kriege* 6:24, 771-83, cf.782 'Moskau der Kulminationspunkt der französischen Unternehmungslinie'

caused by the running-dry (*das Versiegen*) of single sources and the disruption (*das Unterbrechen*) of single relations. Secondly, estimate whether the pain of desiccation would beat the enemy to the ground or whether he would rise up and fight. Thirdly, estimate whether other powers would appear, armed or terrified, to predict the change of political constellations, the breakdown of old relations and the forging of new.

This was of course not easy, especially under the pressure of danger and responsibility, which explained why brilliant strategic judgement and tact were difficult as well as rare. The consequence of this profound difficulty was: 'And so it happens then, that the vast majority of commanders prefer to stay far behind the aim than to approach it too closely, and that beautiful courage and vivid enterprising spirit often overshoot the mark and also miss the purpose. Only the one who does great things with scant means [cf. Friedrich II] has struck lucky.'<sup>1104</sup>

Clausewitz's on-going adjustment of analytical perspective appeared more and more clearly in the texts on attack. The annihilation of enemy fighting forces, the core of the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element, was discussed in parallel with outmanoeuvring and seizure of non-defended areas. He argued that the modest price of minor efforts was seductive but could often not bring real success. Minor efforts fitted situations of weaker motives and limited conditions. They were obviously better than '...purposeless battles. – Victories, that did not allow one to squeeze out success.'<sup>1105</sup> He continued to address briefly a set of aspects of attack such as the offensive battle, the crossing of rivers, attack from defensive positions; attack on fortified camps, mountains, cordons, morass, woods, fortresses, army in quarters, transport; in addition some notes on diversion and invasion.<sup>1106</sup>

Strategic manoeuvring was once more considered as lacking rules, specific modes and *Grundsätze*. It was only subject to individual skill, precision among other things, to find means in small circumstances, creating advantages to influence the outcome.<sup>1107</sup> The problem of conceptualising strategic manoeuvring near the point of equilibrium certainly contributed to Clausewitz's adjustment; to thinking strategy as a continuation

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<sup>1104</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Über den Kulminationspunkt des Sieges', *Vom Kriege* 7:non-numbered text, 935-45, cf. 945. 'Und so geschieht es denn, daß die große Mehrheit der Feldherren lieber weit hinter dem Ziel zurückbleibt, als sich ihm zu sehr zu nahen, und daß ein schöner Mut und hoher Unternehmungsgeist oft darüber hinausgerät und also seinen Zweck verfehlt. Nur wer mit geringen Mitteln Großes tut, hat es glücklich getroffen.'

<sup>1105</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Vernichtung der Feindlichen Streitkräfte', *Vom Kriege* 7:6, 881-82. '...zwecklose Schlachten. - Siege, deren Erfolge sich nicht erschöpfen lassen.'

<sup>1106</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Die Offensivschlacht', *Vom Kriege* 7:7, 883-84; 'Flussübergänge', *Vom Kriege* 7:8, 885-88; 'Angriff von Defensivstellungen', *Vom Kriege* 7:9, 889-90; 'Angriff Verschanzter Lager', *Vom Kriege* 7:10, 891-92; 'Angriff eines Gebirgs', *Vom Kriege* 7:11, 893-96; 'Angriff von Linienkordons', *Vom Kriege* 7:12, 897; 'Angriff von Morästen, Überschwemmungen, Wäldern', *Vom Kriege* 7:14, 901-02; 'Angriff von Festungen', *Vom Kriege* 7:17, 913-18; 'Angriff von Transporten', *Vom Kriege* 7:18, 919-22; 'Angriff einer feindlichen Armee in Quartieren', *Vom Kriege* 7:19, 923-29; 'Diversion', *Vom Kriege* 7:20, 930-33; 'Invasion', *Vom Kriege* 7:21, 934

<sup>1107</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Manövrieren', *Vom Kriege* 7:13, 898-900



of *Politik* rather than as a sharp logic of the warlike element according to the *Urbestimmung* with reductions in real life, as developed in the *Grundvorstellung*.

Attack in a theatre of war was divided similarly to defence, thus with or without decision. A main matter of attack was the effective sphere of victory. The immediate aims of attack were consequently to achieve an initial victory, to neutralise the natural superiority of defence and to create a feeling of progress. Inferiority in numbers had to be compensated for by creating moral superiority.

Clausewitz wanted to remove less clear notions such as surprise and surprise attack (*Überfall*). These notions were often popularised beyond viability as general shortcuts to victory without considering individual circumstances. Encountering and attacking the main force of the enemy had few doubts for an aggressor, while the defender had more options. Prudence was the genius of defence while boldness and confidence were the genius of attack. So Clausewitz had no stereotype of his ideal commander. Different scenarios had actually different demands, which suited commanders differently.

The original object of attack, victory, often first gained importance after a victory. If this object was within the theatre of war the sphere of victory might cover it. The object would then constitute the natural way to pursue the attack to increase the potential of victory. The best avenues of approach were large roads for commerce in general, which Clausewitz obviously borrowed from Bonaparte's manner and preferences. If the enemy capital was the main object of attack then the attacker should look for the next victory between the remaining portion of the defender's main force and the capital. If no object was within the effective sphere, then the attacker had to ask himself when he would commence with real victory. Thus, victory with a covering effect over the object to fulfil the political purpose, since the risk of passing the culmination point was imminent. The attacker's rear was always more vulnerable than the defender's.<sup>1108</sup>

A strategic attack without pursuing a decision could be launched if will and power were absent or insufficient. The object in mind would then be minor, and its accomplishment would induce standstill and equilibrium. Attacks of opportunity and strategic manoeuvring were outlined to characterise the continuation. This type of character, moreover, was the most common type of campaign according to Clausewitz. He listed a set of objects as aims to exemplify this; a piece of land, an important depot or a fortress. The fourth type of object was to deliver favourable combat, from a small encounter to a full battle, for the purpose of honour and trophies. Clausewitz exemplified offensive battles from the wars of Louis XIV as being of that style. The attacker here suddenly had the upper hand by knowing his intention, which was not the case for the defender. A sort of guarantee was inherent in this type of campaigning, namely the lack of real positive will to destroy political existence and equilibrium.<sup>1109</sup>

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<sup>1108</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Angriff eines Kriegstheaters mit Entscheidung', *Vom Kriege* 7:15, 903-907

<sup>1109</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Angriff eines Kriegstheaters ohne Entscheidung', *Vom Kriege* 7:16, 908-12

At this point in the analysis Clausewitz's spectrum of strategic thought encompassed five segments; (1) attack pursuing decision, (2) attack without decision, (3) strategic manoeuvring as a sort of defence against defence around the equilibrium – thus a play of forces in the balance of power, (4) defence without decision and (5) defence pursuing decision. His intention in Book 8 was now to further conceptualise this into schemata for planning and directing campaigns and war.

#### THE CONCEPT OF WAR PLAN TOWARDS A REVISED *GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG*

Clausewitz and Marie restricted their social life after his illness in 1827. They saw hardly any others than Marie's mother and the Bernstorffs, who had lost a child in the summer of 1827. They had also started to see the Müfflings, since the Chief of the General Staff suffered severely from gout and needed support.<sup>1110</sup> Elise Bernstorff's notes expressed Clausewitz's situation in autumn 1827: 'All the suffering of his friends becomes touching anguish to him.'<sup>1111</sup>

Elise continued to characterise Clausewitz as a man with a very sharp intellect who divided and brought order to everything in a conversation. When he felt free to speak, his speech was very fruitful to listen to: noble, pure and to the point. Everything he elaborated became clarity itself in the light his explanations spread on the matter. Clausewitz's appearance was described as strong and pleasant, so his illness apparently did not leave so many marks on him. His profound knowledge of war and the conduct of war were well known, but he was equally well-informed in politics. Even as a grown man he suffered from the severe poverty of his youth in the family home. This was also the reason why he did not invite his highly decorated brothers into his life in Berlin. He felt they were lower social class than the people surrounding the Foreign Minister. Elise von Bernstorff also noted that Clausewitz kept a very low political profile regarding his doings during the reform and the war that had caused him so much trouble afterwards.<sup>1112</sup>

In November 1827 Clausewitz caught a new cold and became depressed by his frequent physical problems. He stayed indoors the whole month and worked most of the time. Gneisenau was told that Clausewitz's theoretical work had become a moral fulcrum that helped him to cope with illness and ordinary life.<sup>1113</sup> After the annual autumn exercise in 1828 he suffered from '*Flußfieber*', a sort of rheumatic fever.<sup>1114</sup> These periods of illness obviously continued to be the time for writing. It seems likely that he took on the war plan book in the autumn of 1827, when many people around him died or were seriously ill.

The *Nachricht* indicated that several drafts (*mehrere Kapitel entworfen*) of chapters for Book 8 already existed in July 1827. The texts in mind were probably the previously

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<sup>1110</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 25 October 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 530-33

<sup>1111</sup> Elise Bernstorff note from 8 October 1827 or soon after, Bernstorff, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit*, Vol 2/2, 101. 'Jedes Leid der Freunde ward ihm [Clausewitz] zur aufregenden Qual.'

<sup>1112</sup> Elise Bernstorff note from 8 October 1827 or soon after, Bernstorff, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit*, Vol 2/2, 101-102

<sup>1113</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 24 November 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 533-35

<sup>1114</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 15 November 1828, *Schriften* (1990), 545-48

mentioned 'On War Plan with limited Aim' and 'War Plan, when Overthrow of the Enemy is the Aim'.<sup>1115</sup> It is possible that other texts existed at this time as well, otherwise Book 8 was written in the second part of 1827. The individual chapters more or less reflected Clausewitz's transition phase to making up his mind and justifying a revision of the *Grundvorstellung*. The preface to Book 8 briefly reviewed the work so far. Clausewitz referred to the old *Grundvorstellung* on the being and purpose of war (*Wesen und Zweck des Krieges*) as a sketch of the *Gesamtbegriff*, the overall concept (cf. *Urbestimmung*) and its surrounding relations.<sup>1116</sup>

Clausewitz described that the work up to now had examined the many difficulties for reason to grasp the important and the risks of getting bogged down in thinking strategy. He stated however that his initial theoretical proposition remained valid. Or we should say more correctly, his initial hypothesis encapsulated in the *Urbestimmung* developed in the *Grundvorstellung* was basically correct. The overthrow of the enemy, *Niederwerfung*, and consequently the annihilation of enemy armed forces, *Vernichtung*, was the natural major aim of the entire warlike act. This had put his enquiry in a position to state that the basic means to accomplish this purpose was combat. However, the many relations and forms present in warlike action besides combat blurred this *Vorstellung*, which was proved by the nature of the matter as well as by experience. It was now time to return to war as a whole to be able to elaborate the war plan and campaign plan. This implied a need to think anew about the initial *Grundvorstellung*.

Book 8 set out to address 'real strategy', the core of command where the other investigated components linked up. Warlike action appeared so simple in discourse and conversation. The Great Captains simplified the complex so that the enormous act of war became individualised into a way of duelling, *Zweikampf*. Yet in reality warlike action was indeed difficult. Theory should help to understand the complex: this was the personification of warlike action. Every brilliant conduct of war was carried out by persons who possessed a great freedom of soul. The utility of war (*der Nutzen*), to make war useful in particular cases, was out of the reach of theory. Theory was didactic, to cultivate judgement on important matters to consider, and this conformed to the current revision of Book 2 on theory as we will see soon.

Theory should with a clear view enlighten the many matters so that reason may find its way around easier; it should eradicate the weeds [*das Unkraut*] that spring up from mistakes everywhere, it should display the relations of the matter among themselves, separate the important from the unimportant. So the *Vorstellungen* can independently congregate to such a core of truth that we call a *Grundsatz*, which by itself holds a line that makes up a rule; in that case should theory indicate this.<sup>1117</sup>

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<sup>1115</sup> Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Zum Kriegs-Plan mit beschränktem Ziel', *Schriften* (1990), 675-80; Clausewitz [1826-spring 1827], 'Kriegsplan, Wenn Niederfung des Feindes das Ziel ist', *Vom Kriege* 8:9, 1009-1040

<sup>1116</sup> The piece in mind was most probably: Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36

<sup>1117</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Einleitung', *Vom Kriege* 8:1, 949-51, cf. 951. 'Die Theorie soll mit einem klaren Blick die Masse der Gegenstände beleuchten, damit der Verstand sich leichter in ihnen

Clausewitz continued to discuss the distinction of 'absolute and real war', which has puzzled later generations. It has been suggested that absolute war was a new idea.<sup>1118</sup> Or that absolute war was pure fiction.<sup>1119</sup> Neither interpretation was entirely correct. The term 'absolute' had previously been used to describe the inclination of older theory to stipulate exact values for success. Clausewitz had suggested 'approximate' as a more appropriate term for strategic theory, considering the elusive impact of moral forces and friction. He also used 'absolute war' to depict his first way of *Vorstellung* rooted in the *Urbestimmung*; the *Grundvorstellung* that encapsulated the warlike element. This was theorized from the experience of the natural populace-based, brutal, warlike wars 1792-1815, as epitomised by Bonaparte. These had been depicted in 1817 as wars ripped lose from diplomatic and fiscal bonds underlying his still effective *Grundvorstellung*.

In thinking about the war plan he returned to the importance of the final political purpose (*endlichen Zweck*) to conduct war with utility. The purpose of a war plan was to envisage the whole warlike act as a single action by aiming it at the final purpose. 'One does not start a war, or one should sensibly not start one, without telling oneself what one desires to accomplish and what one could accomplish, the first being the purpose (*der Zweck*), the second the aim (*das Ziel*).'<sup>1120</sup> These two basic ideas summarized what was necessary for strategic direction in Clausewitz's opinion, from the range of means to the scope of energy required to make an individual scheme for action.

His strict philosophical analyses of the warlike element had proved the correctness of overthrow, *Neiderwerfung*, of the enemy as the natural aim of the warlike act. Anything else was hardly possible. If both parties pursued this aim there would be no standstill in the warlike act. Clausewitz had however already in 1817 explicated the standstill in the warlike act to prove that the pure principle of enmity was subject to reductions, *Ermäßigung*, in reality. He now stated that his initial explanatory modifications no longer sufficed to transfer the original abstract wisdom of war into its manifold concrete *Gestalt*. After all, most wars appeared just as *gegenseitige Entrüstung*, mutual indignation. The resort to arms was usually driven by such purposes as protecting oneself, projecting fear or making a coup.

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finde, sie soll das Unkraut ausreißen, welches der Irrtum überall hat hervorschießen lassen, sie soll die Verhältnisse der Dinge untereinander zeigen, das Wichtige von dem Unwichtigen sondern. Wo sich die Vorstellungen von selbst zu einem solchen Kern der Wahrheit zusammenfinden, den wir Grundsatz nennen, wo sie von selbst eine solche Linie halten, die eine Regel bildet, da soll die Theorie es angeben.'

<sup>1118</sup> Kessel, *Die doppelte Art des Krieges*, 299

<sup>1119</sup> Aron, *Den Krieg Denken*, 25

<sup>1120</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Absoluter Und Wirklicher Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 8:2, 952-55, cf. 952. 'Man fängt keinen Krieg an, oder man sollte vernünftigerweise keinen anfangen, ohne sich zu sagen, was man mit und was man in demselben erreichen will, das erstere ist der Zweck, das andere das Ziel.'

Clausewitz described in a nutshell his new understanding of conflict, which underlay the adjusted view of strategy. War was not the joining of two destructive elements, but the tension (*Spannung*) among still-separated elements. These discharged (*Entladen*) themselves in small single strokes (*Schlagen*). The partition (*Scheidewand*) prohibiting total discharge was civilized life (*Staatsleben*) in Clausewitz's outline. War was affected by the many matters, powers and relations present in *Politik*, which toned down the philosophical consequence. People mostly followed their habitual instincts rather than strict logic and simply overlooked inconsistency.

Inconsistency could be present if one or both parties made war a '*Halbdinge*', an entity without inner coherence, resembling the way he had recently projected strategic manoeuvring. Clausewitz stated that it was easy to doubt the realism of a *Vorstellung* (cf. *Urbestimmung*), suggesting that an absolute being of war would arise if real war in modern time had not allowed this '*absoluten Vollkommenheit*', i.e. absolute perfection of the warlike element to appear. 'After a short prelude, constituted by the French Revolution, he [*der Krieg*] was quickly brought to this point by the reckless Bonaparte. Under him he [war] progressed restlessly until the enemy was prostrate [*niederlag*]; and almost as restlessly the tide turned.'<sup>1121</sup> Clausewitz's presentation projected war as broken loose indeed, a fear that probably underpinned his first way of conceptualising, nested in images of unstoppable roller of violence rather than in political reason and diplomatic finesse.

The choice of enquiring approach was justified by asking whether it was not natural and necessary to return to the original concept of war, thus the *Urbestimmung*, due to the advent of the Napoleonic Wars. However in the next sentence he asked, whether theory should just stop here. Should all wars be evaluated from the Napoleonic yardstick even when they were remote from this model? Moreover, should all military-theoretical requirements be explicated from this point of view? This matter had to be determined before anything sensible could be said about the war plan. Obviously this was anathema to Jomini and others who had made the Napoleonic way of strategy their model of military perfection.

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<sup>1121</sup> Clausewitz [1827], '*Absoluter Und Wirklicher Krieg*', *Vom Kriege* 8:2, 952-55, cf. 953-54. 'Nach einer kurzen Einleitung, die die französische Revolution gemacht hat, hat ihn der rücksichtslose Bonaparte schnell auf diesen Punkt gebracht. Unter ihm ist er rastlos vorgeschritten, bis der Gegner niederlag; und fast ebenso rastlos sind die Rückschläge erfolgt.'

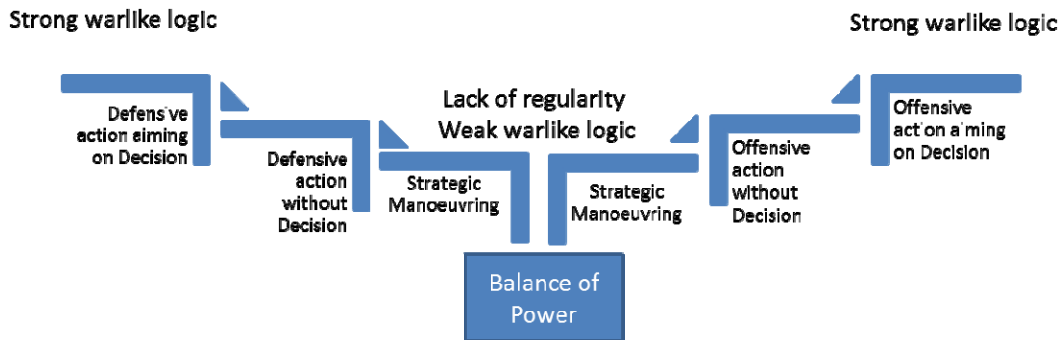


FIGURE 4 THE IDEA OF THE DOUBLE WAY OF WAR, 1827

Clausewitz elaborated the problem. By following the first standpoint theory in general approached necessity, making the whole a clearer and more settled matter; thus – following a clearer warlike logic as depicted above. This hypothesis had however to be discarded through a simple comparison with the history of war since Alexander. Clausewitz felt that one should feel a ‘little ashamed’ at making such a suggestion, which underpinned the polemic character. Even worse was that this type of theory could be disproved in the future despite strong present logic. Consequently it could be overwhelmed by circumstances if a new manner of waging war appeared in the next decade. He elaborated this shift in the opening of Book 8, as the opening quote to this chapter indicates, in a manner clearly indicating that the revision of *Grundvorstellung* was not far away.

Clausewitz realized the limitations of his own experience so as not to make it a definite epitome of future strategy. At this point he more or less turned around his analytical understanding of war; from a pure concept, an *Urbestimmung*, that was reduced in reality to an indistinct entity made up of its surroundings, essentially political. Theory had to allow change and inconsistency to appear from social life. But theory was also obliged to postulate the absolute *Gestalt* of war as a higher structuring concept, as *Gesetz*, to provide intellectual direction reflecting the possibility of truth.

This meant avoiding unilateral dependence on conventions easily destroyed and overlooked; in addition to making theory didactic and not losing sight of what natural war can and must achieve. And Clausewitz never did lose sight of his basic objection to old theory, which remained the major motor of his efforts to explicate a different way of thinking. The understanding of duty (*Pflicht*) in this respect resembled Kantian ethics: ‘Duty is the necessity of one action in respect of a law of thought [*Gesetz*]’. Kant elaborated duty in conjunction with clarifying the categorical imperative in moral life and folk ways.<sup>1122</sup>

Absolute war, thus war in the style of the *Urbestimmung*, but also the condition that also allowed reckless war in the manner of Bonaparte, was a real possibility to

<sup>1122</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 2. Ed. (Riga: Hartknoch, 1786), 14. ‘Pflicht ist die Notwendigkeit einer Handlung aus Achtung fürs Gesetz’

Clausewitz indeed; unthinkable however before the more recent wars but now a clear and present danger. It was consequently his moral obligation to inform future Prussian generations about this havoc; to be prepared to stop reckless war in time, something his generation had failed to do. He justified his standpoint by asking what would have happened if Prussia had dared to enter France in 1798 with 70,000 soldiers; or had dared to start war with 100,000 soldiers, viewing the first pistol shot as the 'spark to make the mine explode' in 1806. His moral point was that one had to dare politically and militarily to undertake appropriate action before the reckless player had gained overwhelming strength.

For this reason the next chapter was divided into two related problems in thinking strategy: the variety of war's inner coherence and the magnitude of the warlike purpose and effort. In the war of the absolute *Gestalt*, action was nested in necessary causes swiftly unfolding. Here there was no neutral unsubstantial interspace [*wesenloser neutraler Zwischenraum*], and this was due to the manifold reciprocal effect [*der vielfältigen Wechselwirkungen*], which closed itself in war according to the *Grundvorstellung* (Book 1:1). The reciprocal effect occurred due to the coherence of unfolding combats (as described in Book 1:2) and the culmination point of victory that involved the scale of losses and defeats (Book 7:4-5).<sup>1123</sup> The use of 'manifold reciprocal effect' indicated that Clausewitz had started to rethink his original conception of reciprocal effect from Book 1. The manuscript of the old *Grundvorstellung* had notes in the margin that outlined the final threefold conception of the reciprocal effect printed in the seminal first chapter of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>1124</sup>

Final success was the only type of success according to the first type of *Vorstellung* depicting absolute war. 'The end crowned the work' in Clausewitz words. War appeared as a consistent whole where the single moment of success had only value in relation to the whole, like a counter in a game. The conquering of Moscow had only value to Bonaparte if he could achieve the peace he had in mind. One part had not occurred however: the disintegration of the Russian Army. This *Vorstellung* of success was created out of conceptual logic and could be viewed as an utmost reciprocity (*äußerste*) to outmatch the other contender, thus like the simplification in the *Grundvorstellung* depicting war as wrestling-match.

A second way of *Vorstellung* could be created from history. Frequently political desire had been satisfied by achieving a small, moderate advantage without driving the enemy to despair and complete submission. The more the warlike element had been moderated the more frequent had that way of war appeared, in Clausewitz's opinion. Even if the first way of *Vorstellung* had occurred only once it was equally true, but it was also inappropriate to clarify all wars:

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<sup>1123</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Innerer Zusammaenhang des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 8:3a, 956-59, cf. 956

<sup>1124</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 630-31

If we stick to the first of these two ways of *Vorstellung* we must realize the necessity that each and every war must be comprehended as a whole, and the commander must already have before his eyes the aim where every line converges. If we allow the second-way *Vorstellung*, subordinate advantages *per se* can haunt the will and the further outcome can be left to the unfolding of events. As neither of these two ways of *Vorstellung* is without results, theory cannot do without either. The practical difference is that they require the first to be used as the *Grundvorstellung* that underlies everything and the second merely as modification when justified by circumstances.<sup>1125</sup>

Clausewitz had now theorized two ways to determine the strategic aim of an enterprise. Really tense conflicts conveyed the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element, i.e. absolute war, by pursuing a predefined aim, and this is more or less the generic model of today's military thinking. According to the second, the unfolding of events was used as an indicator to determine the appropriate aim. The yardstick to determine the guiding way of *Vorstellung* was the currents of *Politik*. The more potentially at stake and involving the mass of society the more the first way of thinking would reflect the coherence of the situation.<sup>1126</sup> Consequently, the second part of the text considered how much coercion an enemy could be subjected to. This emanated from the scope of political desire, not necessarily alike among the parties. It was a long piece and seemingly very important for Clausewitz to justify his modified standpoint.<sup>1127</sup>

In the *Nachricht* in July 1827 the two ways of war were comprehended as a seamless spectrum. To tailor an enterprise inside this framework Clausewitz turned to the role of strategic judgement. At exactly this point, to adapt and conduct war with utility became war art and no longer subject to any form of science. To determine the necessary level of coercion was an ambiguous task, not at least due to the difficulty of estimating the moral forces in play. A too-ambitious plan could escalate war towards the utmost, making the enterprise lose its political utility.

To be able to decide upon a productive aim, the fine-tuned map of *Politik* had to be clarified – a task for genius indeed. The pressure of danger on normal people's ability to act was once more brought forward as hampering to strategic judgement, making military high command very difficult. Clausewitz wanted to establish that the only

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<sup>1125</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Innerer Zusammenhang des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 8:3a, 956-59, cf. 959. 'Halten wir uns an die erste dieser beiden Vorstellungsarten, so müssen wir die Notwendigkeit einsehen, daß ein jeder Krieg von Hause aus als ein Ganzes aufgefaßt werde, und daß beim ersten Schritt vorwärts der Feldherr schon das Ziel im Auge habe, wohin alle Linien laufen. Lassen wir die zweite Vorstellungsart zu, so können untergeordnete Vorteile um ihrer selbst willen verfolgt und das Weitere den weiteren Ergebnissen überlassen werden. Da keine dieser beiden Vorstellungsarten ohne Resultat ist, so kann die Theorie auch keine derselben entbehren. Der Unterschied, den sie im Gebrauch derselben macht, besteht darin, daß sie fordert, die erstere als die Grundvorstellung auch überall zum Grunde zu legen und die letztere nur als eine Modifikation zu gebrauchen, die durch die Umstände gerechtfertigt wird.'

<sup>1126</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Innerer Zusammenhang des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 8:3a, 956-59

<sup>1127</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Von der Grösse des Kriegerischen Zwecks und der Anstrengung', *Vom Kriege* 8:3b, 960-74



viable way for strategic reasoning was through the individual case and not via abstract military models of conduct, thus the 'strategic manual' or 'cook-book' approach to the conduct of war.

The historical record showed that most belligerents had conducted war in their own way and not according to generic models and aims. To further clarify his standpoint on *Politik* Clausewitz presented a comprehensive history of how force had been utilized and performed according to individual purposes and circumstances, from the old Greek republics to Bonaparte. The aspect of energy emanating from *Politik* was very important when deciding upon an appropriate aim, exemplified by the events after the French revolution. The whole power of the warlike element had been liberated from its conventional bounds by the performance of Bonaparte. War had no longer any observable borders due to the energy governments and people together had put into these wars.

Clausewitz understood this as war driven by pure hostility, in which the interests of people and their rulers converged. Whether more conventional war limited by the interest of governments would recur was difficult to predict, since everyone was now aware of, and feared, the dangers of large energised war. In conclusion every age and culture had its way of war, of which the strategist had to be aware when setting an appropriate aim for an enterprise.<sup>1128</sup>

To clarify a war plan according to the first way of *Vorstellung* it was important to understand what the overthrow of an enemy really implied. To conquer a whole country was mostly not necessary. Clausewitz began to explain offensive strategic effect with the concept of *Schwerpunkt*. To set an appropriate aim was as much about timing as about striking right. Notably, for Clausewitz, striking right had a combined military and political scope in time as well in space.

The Revolutionary Party would most certainly have been stopped if Paris had been occupied in 1792, while their army lacked potency. The occupation of Paris decided everything in 1814 as well as in 1815 due to the on-going disintegration of Bonaparte's army. Had Napoleon managed to disintegrate the Russian Army standing on the road to Kaluga before or after the occupation of Moscow, he would probably have achieved peace in 1812. In 1805 a decision was achieved at Austerlitz by the defeat of the Russian Army. Before this event the occupation of two-thirds of Austria was not enough to bring peace. In other cases conquest of the whole country was not enough to settle peace, and this observation led to the concept of *Schwerpunkt*:

We see also here that success cannot be determined from general causes; the individual causes that no person not in place can detect, and many of them morals that hardly ever are spoken of, in themselves the tiniest lineaments and chances that appear in history just as anecdotes, are often decisive. What theory can say about them at this point is as follows: it is essential to observe the dominating conditions of both states. From these a certain *Schwerpunkt* will arise, a hub [or hot spot] of power and

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<sup>1128</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Von der Grösse des Kriegerischen Zwecks und der Anstrengung', *Vom Kriege* 8:3b, 960-74, cf. 973-74

movement from which the whole depends, and on this *Schwerpunkt* of the enemy the joint blow of all our forces must be struck. The minor depends on the great [cf. the undated note], the unimportant on the important the random on the essential. This must guide our view. Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Karl XII, Friedrich the Great had their *Schwerpunkt* in their army and had these been disintegrated their role [in history] would have had a poor place; it lies mostly in the capital in states torn apart by domestic factions: in small states that rely on more powerful it lies in the ally's army; in coalitions it lies in the unity of interest: in *Volksbewaffnung* [popular armies] in the main individual commander and in public opinion.<sup>1129</sup>

Clausewitz continued to elaborate the *Vorstellung* to make a campaign to overthrow an enemy. The enemy's '*Hauptverhältnis*', main conditions and dominating circumstances, were the target for the effort, which implied the combined political and military condition for enemy power. On this way of thinking, the most secure starting point, at least always important, was to achieve disintegration of enemy armed forces if these constituted a potency of power. The next reduction Clausewitz suggested was to occupy the capital as the focal point of political life and administration. A third option for prostrating an enemy was an effective blow against his most powerful ally to remove the prospect of support. This was the function of Austerlitz. This reasoning was applicable to a coherent enemy that followed the same policy or political line.

The next aspect elaborated was therefore the political coherence of an enemy, to understand the prospect of reducing the aim to strike one *Schwerpunkt*. When two states joined forces against a third this was by definition one war. Political coherence was however always a matter of degree. Did any opponent have individual interests and enough power to pursue action on its own? Had the other opponents only the interest and power to subordinate their effort under the stronger? The more the actual situation answered to the second question the more it was possible to view the combined enemy as one. The main enterprise could then be simplified to aiming one main strike. As long this political and military reduction was possible, it remained the most efficient way to construct one means to success.

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<sup>1129</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Nähre Bestimmung des Kriegerischen Zieles Niederwerfung des Feindes', *Vom Kriege* 8:4, 975-83, cf. 976-77. 'Wir sehen, auch hier läßt sich der Erfolg nicht aus allgemeinen Ursachen bestimmen; die individuellen, die kein Mensch übersieht, der nicht zur Stelle ist, und viele moralische, die nie zur Sprache kommen, selbst die kleinsten Züge und Zufälle, die sich in der Geschichte nur als Anekdoten zeigen, sind oft entscheidend. Was sich die Theorie hier sagen kann, ist folgendes: Es kommt darauf an, die vorherrschenden Verhältnisse beider Staaten im Auge zu haben. Aus ihnen wird sich ein gewisser Schwerpunkt, ein Zentrum der Kraft und Bewegung bilden, von welchem das Ganze abhängt, und auf diesen Schwerpunkt des Gegners muß der gesammelte Stoß aller Kräfte gerichtet sein. Das Kleine hängt stets vom Großen ab, das Unwichtige von dem Wichtigen das Zufällige von dem Wesentlichen. Dies muß unseren Blick leiten. Alexander, Gustav Adolf, Karl XII., Friedrich der Große hatten ihren Schwerpunkt in ihrem Heer, wäre dies zertrümmert worden, so würden sie ihre Rolle schlecht ausgespielt haben; bei Staaten, die durch innere Parteiungen zerrissen sind, liegt er meistens in der Hauptstadt; bei kleinen Staaten, die sich an mächtige stützen, liegt er im Heer dieser Bundesgenossen; bei Bündnissen liegt er in der Einheit des Interesses; bei Volksbewaffnung in der Person der Hauptführer und in der öffentlichen Meinung.'

Clausewitz therefore suggested the *Grundsatz*: ‘...as long as we can defeat the other enemies in one [blow], the overthrow of this one must be the aim of war, because we strike the joint *Schwerpunkt* of the whole war in this one.’<sup>1130</sup> This way of thinking applied in most cases, but not all. If not, one had to accept fighting two or more wars in parallel, due to the political and military independence of the enemies. This presupposed superiority over all one’s enemies otherwise overthrow was not a suitable aim for the enterprise. Clausewitz suggested a little test to be made by the strategist to decide upon the realism of the ultimate aim: were the available fighting forces enough first, to achieve one decisive victory; secondly, to make the expenditure of force required for pursuit when equilibrium was out of the question? In addition the political situation must be so that the effort to achieve an overthrow would not antagonise new enemies that could change the balance of power and jeopardise the original prospect of success.

The complete overthrow of Prussia in 1806 had been possible due to the retreat of the Russian Army. Bonaparte had achieved the same in Spain in 1808 in relation to Britain, but not in 1809. If France not had been so overwhelmingly, morally as well as physically, superior to Austria in 1809 an evacuation of Spain would probably have been necessary. The strategic estimate had thus to consider the perspective of these aspects to avoid unnecessary costs, counter-productive efforts and the risk of losing everything achieved in the final outcome; more or less a Pyrrhic victory.

Clausewitz objected to the view in military discourse that time was a factor of force, suggesting that half the effort required half the forces to accomplish the same in a somewhat longer time. Every act of war took time of course, but reciprocity between time and force as in dynamics did not obtain in the conduct of war. Instead psychological aspects were more appropriate to consider, such as envy, concern and gallantry arousing allies for the party in trouble. Every victory consumed power, and so would occupation. Clausewitz objected to what was termed ‘*methodischen Angriffskrieges*’, i.e. methodical aggressive war. A conquest could not be made quickly enough, since time would in the long run work more for the party in danger of prostration and therefore time *per se* could evoke a turn of the tide (*Umschwung*). A close, less far reaching aim was of course easier to achieve but not always sufficient, and this posed a recurring strategic dilemma.<sup>1131</sup>

From ‘absolute aim’ Clausewitz turned to ‘limited aim’. The realism of the former required a massive physical or moral superiority, or a great enterprising spirit inclined to gamble for high stakes. When these qualities were not present the limited aim could be of two kinds: limited conquest or maintenance status quo by awaiting a better moment. The latter presupposed that the future would be better than the present situation. A better future *per se* motivated the idea of defensive war, which had to be

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<sup>1130</sup> Clausewitz [1827], ‘Nähre Bestimmung des Kriegerischen Zieles Niederwerfung des Feindes’, *Vom Kriege* 8:4, 975-83, cf. 978. ‘..solange wir imstande sind, die übrigen Gegner in einem zu besiegen, die Niederwerfung dieses einen das Ziel des Krieges sein muß, weil wir in diesem einen den gemeinschaftlichen Schwerpunkt des ganzen Krieges treffen.’

<sup>1131</sup> Clausewitz [1827], ‘Nähre Bestimmung des Kriegerischen Zieles Niederwerfung des Feindes’, *Vom Kriege* 8:4, 975-83

measured against the possibilities in the present situation if the future belonged to the enemy. A third possibility was that neither contender could determine the prospect and lacked a proper idea of how to think about the continuation. Clausewitz elaborated these options applied to the 'small state'; he obviously had Prussia in mind.

The limited aim was to be investigated further in two separate chapters; one on aggressive war and one on defensive war. But the aspects of *Politik* had however to be gone into first. Modifications of the warlike aim had up to now been developed from inner causes of the warlike element *per se*; now it was time to address outer causes arising from the element of *Politik*. This view was consistent with the way Clausewitz had developed strategic theory since the start in 1816-1818. He had regarded *Politik* the provider of purpose from the outside of the actual warlike act, as a subject for theoretical analysis.<sup>1132</sup>

Clausewitz referred for the first time at the end of the text to the revised chapter two of Book 1 on '*Purpose and Means in War*'. The original chapter two of Book 1 addressed only '*Means of War*'.<sup>1133</sup> This passage further supports the finding that the revision of the *Grundvorstellung* took place in middle of the work of conceptualising the war plan in Book 8, during the autumn of 1827. The two pieces mentioned, necessary to expand the outline of limited aim into aggressive war and into defensive war, appear to be part of Clausewitz's transition phase towards a revision of the *Grundvorstellung*.

The first text addressed limited aim in aggressive war and referred to the chapter on the 'culmination point of victory' in Book 7. The limited way of aggressive war was motivated by the apparent danger of weakening strength in attack. Clausewitz exemplified this with Friedrich's conquest of Silesia in 1740-1741, which had *not* weakened his fighting forces. The Austrians had in this case just a tiny avenue of approach, which was easy to defend. The general consequence was that the limited aggressive strategic aim could to a lesser extent disengage from strong points than could strategic attacks aimed at the *Schwerpunkt* of the enemy state and power. The joining of forces was thus not driven so far in time and space.

The need to attack simultaneously in lower concentration had the advantage that it could utilize dispersed defence with small forces: 'In this way via such moderate aims everything becomes more level; the whole warlike act can no longer be compressed into one main action directed according to *Hauptgesichtspunkten* [main viewpoints]; he [the warlike act] spreads himself our more, the friction will increase and everywhere chance will be more present.'<sup>1134</sup> The role of the commander was diminished or even neutralized by this way of war. Consequently, Clausewitz asserted,

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<sup>1132</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Fortsetzung. Beschränktes Ziel', *Vom Kriege* 8:5, 984-86, cf. 986

<sup>1133</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], 'II tes Kapitel. Mittel des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 636-39

<sup>1134</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Beschränktes Ziel. Angriffskrieg', *Vom Kriege* 8:7, 999-1002. 'Auf diese Weise stellt sich bei einem so mittelmäßigen Ziele alles mehr im Niveau; der ganze kriegerische Akt kann nicht mehr in eine Haupthandlung zusammengedrängt und diese nach Hauptgesichtspunkten geleitet werden; er breitet sich mehr aus, überall wird die Friktion größer und überall dem Zufall mehr Feld eingeräumt.'

the commander would try to overcome this tendency and regain command by making certain points more important.

Limited aim in defence could be used to '*ermüden*', tire an enemy with a positive will. The aggressor would then only risk losing committed forces however. Clausewitz discussed the shortcomings and concluded that it was just part of the waiting phase in defence, since the aggressor was not bound to be tired from his inability to gain a decision. The aggressor had to pass an *Umschwungspunkt*, point of changeover; otherwise the disadvantage was with the defender. If the latter could not improve his situation by inner means, i.e. by resistance, then the only means from outside was new allies obtained from political relations.

Clausewitz pointed to two defensive options to ponder. Either one should keep the country as intact as possible to gain time by defending strong points and conducting small offensive operations, or one should retreat into the interior with a more positive aim in mind to retaliate hard after any enemy setback (*Rückschlag*). He discussed some examples and claimed that the Russians had taken the second option perfectly but not deliberately. The conclusion was that a great gain in defence relied on decision and that was only possible by gambling with high stakes.<sup>1135</sup> The aggressive undertone might suggest that this text was written during the phase of exploration in Book 6 to present the 'device', still ruled by the old *Grundvorstellung*.

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This chapter has addressed the transition that took place from the end of book 6 on defence to the middle of book 8 on the war plan. To Clausewitz this was a process of pondering and ambivalence. How to adjust the theoretical vantage point; hence how to conceptualize the ontology of the warlike element? The chapter explained the concept of attack and noted Clausewitz's theoretical emphasize of the *Kulminationspunkt* as the fulcrum of all campaign plans.

The concept of war plan was elucidated, which outlined the aiming of campaigns. Two major *Vorstellungen* were clarified, either following the *Urbestimmung* towards a plan of overthrow, or the limited-aim approach. Clausewitz recognized the need to adjust the *Grundvorstellung*, which most likely took place in the middle of outlining the war plan to make the concept of war plan complete and coherent. The chapter noted Clausewitz's recognition of the limit of theory. To make war purposeful was out of reach for theory.

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<sup>1135</sup> Clausewitz [1827], 'Beschränktes Ziel. Verteidigung', *Vom Kriege* 8:8, 1003-08. The editor of the 1880 edition of *Vom Kriege* suggested this text was written in 1828. See Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (print 1883), 597

## 13. THE ADJUSTMENT

### REVISING THE ONTOLOGY AND THE CONCEPT OF THEORY

Thus once more: war is an instrument of *Politik*; he [war] must necessarily carry its character; he [war] must be measured according to its dimensions; the conduct of war is therefore in the main outlines *Politik* itself, which swaps the pen for the rapier, but has not for all that ceased to think according to its own laws of thought.<sup>1136</sup>

In a word, *Kriegskunst* becomes *Politik* at its highest standpoint, but a *Politik* that delivers battles instead of writing notes.<sup>1137</sup>

This chapter addresses Clausewitz's final texts and his attitude to his results. From now on, he argued that strategy should be thought as *Politik* with modified means. The use and intensity of combat depended on tension, i.e. the conflict and the political in broad sense, in the individual case. The chapter analyses the important letters to Major Röder at Christmas 1827 and the last set of texts written for Book 8. Clausewitz finally took the position that the form of thinking most suitable to strategy was similar to *Politik*, as the quote above indicates. Secondly, the revision of the concept of theory for strategic thought includes his final standpoints to achieve coherence in his argument. He suggests that the concept of theory should be limited to intelligent observation for a didactic purpose. His ideas of theory express his final analytical twist. Thirdly, the two last studies of strategy in Bonaparte's campaigns of 1796 and 1799 are briefly elaborated. A discussion of his final attitude, apparently ambivalent, to the revised *Grundvorstellung* and his work concludes the chapter.

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<sup>1136</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-1828], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf. 998. 'Also noch einmal: der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik; er muß notwendig ihren Charakter tragen, er muß mit ihrem Maße messen; die Führung des Krieges in seinen Hauptumrissen ist daher die Politik selbst, welche die Feder mit dem Degen vertauscht, aber darum nicht aufgehört hat, nach ihren eigenen Gesetzen zu denken.'

<sup>1137</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-1828], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf. 994. 'Mit einem Wort, die Kriegskunst auf ihrem höchsten Standpunkte wird zur Politik, aber freilich eine Politik, die statt Noten zu schreiben, Schlachten liefert.'

## RETHINKING THE *GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG* – WAR IS A FICKLE TRINITY

It is apparent that Clausewitz investigated and revised the *Grundvorstellung* after July 1827 to improve the way-pointing idea of war for strategic thought, hence the ontology of the warlike element. He wrote four letters to his friends Röder and Gröben between Christmas 1827 and November 1829, which provide the best external indications of the late development of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>1138</sup> As suggested, Book 8 was a phase of transition and rethinking. The initial *Grundvorstellung* was in place until the middle of this book as proved by the opening statement of chapter four: 'The aim of war should according to its concept always be the overthrow of the enemy; this is the *Grundvorstellung* from which we depart.'<sup>1139</sup>

The political purpose and military aim had coincided completely in the initial *Grundvorstellung* of the warlike element that clarified the *Urbestimmung* as a natural logic of war modified by circumstances in reality: 'This robbery of the firmness to resist is the actual overthrow of the wrestler. For the political purpose it is the means, and for the warlike act it is the aim: on this aim, on this warlike purpose the attention of theory is now going to be focused.'<sup>1140</sup> Seemingly, Clausewitz regarded now his initial theoretical tone insufficient or too simple as an introduction to his work.

The letters to Major Carl von Röder at Christmas 1827 provide the first and best external evidence to understand his frank incorporation of *Politik* into the *Kriegskunst*. Röder was at this time responsible in the general staff for the middle theatre of war as head of the section dealing with prudent planning against Austria.<sup>1141</sup> Clausewitz had been asked to elaborate upon two strategic *Aufgaben*, didactic/prudent problems, issued by Karl von Müffling, Chief of the General Staff, to his staff, in addition to saying

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<sup>1138</sup> Clausewitz to Carl v. Röder, Berlin, 22 December 1827, including 'Die erste Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1979), 495-517; Clausewitz to Röder, Berlin, 22 December 1827, including 'Die zweite Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1979), 518-25; Clausewitz to Carl v.d. Gröben, Berlin 2 January 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 421; Clausewitz to Gröben, 21 November 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der Moderne Kriegslehre*, 422-23

<sup>1139</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827], 'Nähre Bestimmung des Kriegerischen Zieles Niederwerfung des Feindes', *Vom Kriege* 8:4, 975-83, cf. 975 'Das Ziel des Krieges sollte nach seinem Begriff stets die Niederwerfung des Gegners sein; dies ist die Grundvorstellung, von der wir ausgehen.'

<sup>1140</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 630-36, cf. 630. 'Dieses Rauben aller Widerstandsfähigkeit ist das eigentliche Niederwerfen des Ringers. Für den politischen Zweck ist es das Mittel für den kriegerischen Akt ist es das Ziel, auf dieses Ziel; auf diesen kriegerischen Zweck ist zunächst die Aufmerksamkeit der Theorie zu richten.'

<sup>1141</sup> See note 1 in 'Zwei Briefe des Generals von Clausewitz Gedanken zur Abwehr', *Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau* (Berlin: Mittler, Sonderheft March 1937), 1. Clausewitz letters was first published by Rothfehls as 'Zwei strategische Briefe von Clausewitz' mitgeteilt von Hans Rothfehls, *Wissen und Wehr* No. 3 (1923), 159-78

something about Röder's solutions and a solution from an unknown general-staff member titled 'M', who maybe was Lieutenant *Graf von Monts*.<sup>1142</sup>

In the first reply Clausewitz was eager to state that any answer was just hypothetical and of purely military-scientific interest. 'First and foremost please excuse me if I commence *ab ovo* [Latin for from the egg or from the beginning], as nothing in this world departs as much from all fundamentals [cf. the warlike element], that is completely true and unquestionable relationships to the necessary, as the so-called strategy.'<sup>1143</sup> *Ab ovo* was a term from Horace's *Ars Poetica* to describe that a situation such as the Trojan War would never have happened if something else had not taken place first. Clausewitz literally refuted in the letter the prospect of prudent military planning before actual conflict. This was due to the absence of real *Politik* to make sense of the usual estimate of space, time and forces: one could say the absence of the personified political map that depicted the tension of conflict.

War is never an independent matter, but the continuation of *Politik* with modified means, in that sense the main lineaments of all larger strategic projects are of mostly political nature, and always all the more, the more they embrace the whole of war and a state. The whole war plan emanates directly from the political being of the warring states as well as their relations to others...But the element of *Politik* also moves into the single parts of a campaign, and it is rare indeed for any desired great act of war, a battle and so on, to take place without some influence of it becoming evident. On this view a purely military evaluation of a large strategic whole and a purely military project thereof cannot arise. This point of view is quite necessary, it seems natural if one only keeps an eye on the history of war, it requires hardly any proof. That it nevertheless is not yet settled is shown in that one still separates the purely military [aspects] of a large strategic undertaking from the political and wishes to view the latter as something improper. War is nothing but the continuation of political endeavours with modified means. I proffer this view as the basis for the whole of strategy and believe that anyone refusing to recognize this necessity has not yet fully understood what it is all about. With this *Grundsatz* the whole history of war becomes understandable; without it everything is full of the greatest absurdities.<sup>1144</sup>

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<sup>1142</sup> See introduction to 'Carl von Clausewitz: Two Letters of Strategy', CSI Reprint Edited and translated by Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Fort Leavenworth, US Army Command and Staff College, 1984), 1-5

<sup>1143</sup> Clausewitz to Carl v. Röder, Berlin, 22 December 1827, including 'Die erste Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1979), 495-517, cf. 495. 'Verzeihen Sie mir zuvörderst, wenn ich *ab ovo* anfangen, den nichts in der Welt entbehrt so sehr aller Grundlagen d.h. aller ganz wahren und unzweifelhaften Beziehungen zu dem Notwendigen wie die sogenannte Strategie.'

<sup>1144</sup> Clausewitz to Carl v. Röder, Berlin, 22 December 1827, including 'Die erste Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1979), 495-517, cf. 495-96. 'Der Krieg ist kein selbständiges Ding, sondern die Fortsetzung der Politik mit veränderten Mitteln, daher sind die Hauptlineamente aller großen strategischen Entwürfe *größtenteils politischer Natur*, und immer um so mehr, je mehr sie das Ganze des Krieges und Staates umfassen. Der ganze Kriegsplan geht unmittelbar aus dem politischen Dasein der beiden kriegführenden Staaten sowie aus ihren Verhältnissen zu anderen hervor ...Aber auch in die einzelnen Teile eines Feldzugs zieht das politische Element hinein, und es ist wohl selten irgendein großer Akt des Krieges, wie eine Schlacht usw., wo sich nicht



So, he criticized the military inclination to do prudent strategic planning according to a purely military yardstick that overlooked the fact that all real conduct of war took place in an individual political situation. He frankly dismissed military logic as a framework for campaign planning. Clausewitz refuted also the inclination in military discourse to compare Friedrich and Bonaparte, which Jomini, for example, had done extensively in *Traité des grandes opérations militaires*.<sup>1145</sup> It was totally irrelevant since the former had five million subjects and the latter 40 million. Bonaparte had seized power, a usurper, and was always a keen player for high stakes. Friedrich had been more of an administrator to his 'Patrimonium'. It was not possible to construct a hypothetical strategic case in Clausewitz's opinion that reflected real individual powers and circumstances in play.

The strategist must always work from the current political purpose to suggest a proper aim for the campaign. The difference between overthrow and limited aim was elaborated to make this point clear. The current norm, to view the purpose of overthrow in the manner of Bonaparte, as standard was not right since the limited aim was clearly visible in the historical record and constituted the framework for 49 campaigns out of 50.

The more *Politik* was about the grand and embraced the whole, the being and interest of all people, the more would *Politik* and hostility converge. The wars of overthrow did not lack the political principle; this just coincided completely with the pure concepts of *Gewalt* and *Vernichtung*, i.e. force and annihilation, intrinsic to the *Urbestimmung* and conceptualized as *Grundvorstellung*. This condition had made *Politik* (then as pure reason assumedly) temporarily invisible.

The more real war conformed to the concepts of force and annihilation the easier it became to understand and logically develop war from these concepts to think strategy, and the more the situation tended to be one thing of necessary coherence, which appeared as apolitical and purely hostile. This way of war had consequently been adopted as the norm of war in military thought. Seemingly, this was the way Clausewitz had viewed the problem himself until he adjusted the perspective to convey the gap between attack and defence with *Politik* in the broader sense.

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noch einiger Einfluß davon zeigte. Nach dieser Ansicht kann von einer rein militärischen Beurteilung eines groß strategischen Ganzen sowie von einem rein militärischen Entwurf desselben nicht die Rede sein. Daß diese Ansicht eine ganz notwendige ist, die, wenn man nur die Kriegsgeschichte im Auge hat *ganz nahe liegt*, bedarf wohl keines Beweises. Daß sie aber dennoch bis jetzt nicht festgestellt worden ist, zeigt sich eben darin, daß man jetzt immer noch das rein Militärische eines großen strategischen Entwurfes von dem Politischen hat trennen und das letztere wie etwas Ungehöriges hat betrachten wollen. *Der Krieg ist nichts als die Fortsetzung der politischen Bestrebungen mit verändertem Mittel*. Diese Ansicht lege ich der ganzen Strategie zugrunde und glaube, daß, wer sich weigert, ihre Notwendigkeit anzukennen, noch nicht recht einsieht, worauf es ankommt. Durch diesen Grundsatz wird die ganze Kriegsgeschichte verständlich, ohne ihn ist alles voll der größten Absurditäten.'

<sup>1145</sup> See Jomini, *Traité des grandes opérations militaires* (Paris: Giguet et Michaud, 1807-09); Ibid, *Kritische und militärische Geschichte der Feldzüge Friedrichs des Zweitem, verglichen mit denen des Kaisers Napoleon und dem neuen Systeme* (1811)

The warlike aim was to be selected by estimating and comparing the political purpose and political conditions of the parties. A strategic project constructed purely out of a military correlation of time and space was not sufficient. Muffling's problem had not included the necessary political details. The simple military solution arising from the example was to counter the most dangerous Austrian line of operation, which Clausewitz refuted as being insufficient to construct a real course of action.<sup>1146</sup>

Clausewitz had realized during 1827 that his initial model, thinking sharply about something that was mainly a product of individual interaction and ambitions on a varying scale, had to be adjusted in its fundamental tone and device. The tendency of military discourse after Waterloo had been to adopt the Napoleonic experience as standard - paradigm. Clausewitz had done the same, partly since he had the direct ambition to warn the next generations against reckless war. But finally these grand energised conditions could not be adopted as preconditions. The first *Grundvorstellung* had more or less dragged the ideas in that direction, even if modifications and uncertainty about required effort had been expounded clearly.

The essay that elaborated the new *Grundvorstellung* posed a question: 'What is War?' instead of the older clarification 'The Purpose of War'. The new text was about three times longer. Many themes recurred with a deeper analysis. The piece was written during the autumn of 1827 and probably under consideration until it was sent to Gröben in November 1829. Marie's 1832 Preface to *Vom Kriege* clearly stated 1827 as the year of writing. The numbered paragraphs in the essay were to depict a row of building blocks (*Bausteine*), not entitled so out of pedantry but for convenience for Clausewitz to quickly find his way around.<sup>1147</sup>

The original purpose of the *Grundvorstellung* was to set a tone to think strategy properly, to stipulate the most important concepts and clarify expectations. The ruling *Grundvorstellung* derived from the *Urbestimmung* had brought forward the warlike element and the reciprocal effect. The new text was mostly not new in content, except from a modified view of *Politik*. It was more or less a mimic of Clausewitz's analytical train of thought – an intellectual *tour de force* that compressed about eleven years of work. The text seems to have been the first piece in the set of texts that frankly joined *Politik* to war theoretically, at least according to how Clausewitz referred internally between his final texts. The revision had been necessary to complete Book 8 and perhaps also to be able to revise and perfect Book 7.

The text was actually inserted in 1832 by Marie's brother as the opening chapter of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>1148</sup> Clausewitz was seemingly ambivalent towards his result, which I address at the conclusion of this chapter. As a matter of fact the new text asking: 'What is war?' – did not contain the word '*Grundvorstellung*' as the original text did. The reasons may be several: Clausewitz had abandoned this way of presenting his case, which seems unlikely. The text was simply a theoretical investigation in progress,

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<sup>1146</sup> Clausewitz to Carl v. Röder, Berlin, 22 December 1827, including 'Die erste Aufgabe', *Schriften* (1979), 495-517, cf 496-503

<sup>1147</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, 21 November 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der Modernen Kriegslehre*, 422-23

<sup>1148</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213

an essay not yet ready to be incorporated as way-pointing idea. However, the text problematizes the fickleness of war, which clarifies the ramification on theory very well indeed. Basically, the piece theorized the interaction of the warlike element, the element of chance and the element of *Politik* slightly reconceptualised in comparison to doctrine. I now trace and comment on Clausewitz's essay. The individual 'building blocks' are referred to in brackets.

(1) The first building block was a preface. Clausewitz described a threefold way of analysis; from the individual element (cf. warlike element), to combined structures (cf. the element of chance) and finally the whole in context (cf. the element of *Politik*). This can be compared to the structure adopted in the essays on art and architecture. The need to first grasp the essence of the whole (*das Wesen des Ganzen*) was stated as imperative. The individual had always to be understood via the whole. Thus, the effect of the warlike element must be understood through *Politik* and chance. In addition, one had to understand the real conflict to think strategy properly and not shoot off into theoretical and practical speculation.

(2) The initial definition of the concept of war resembled the old one, setting the same polemic tone. Clausewitz would stay put with the 'warlike element' encapsulated in the *Zweikamp*, the duel/bout, to avoid slipping into any awkward definitions like other military writers did. War was nothing but an extended duel: one unit thought of as two wrestlers trying to coerce the other by physical force, via the immediate aim of overthrowing the other, rendering him prostrate. This way of thinking was partly derived as noted already from studying personified strategy as the duels of the Great Captains.

Clausewitz had sought to boil down the individual, epitomized art of war into coherent concepts. In the line of the *Urbestimmung* he stated: '*War is thus an act of force, to coerce our enemy to fulfil our will.*'<sup>1149</sup> The field of strategic manoeuvring and limited aims lacked the coherence present in polarised war however. This problem had puzzled him – to convey theoretically and think sharply even in the field of tension near equilibrium. To Clausewitz it was enough to state that force was equipped by the state of inventions of the age to think strategy properly. In addition, conceptually, war according to its primordial roots was only faintly circumscribed by the limitation imposed by the contenders themselves under the name of *völkerrechtlicher Sitte*, i.e. moral tradition - conventions.

Technology was foremost a tactical problem and never a major concern for proper strategic thinking. Conceptually, morals were conventions and wishful thinking, not stable or necessary enough to construct a strict logic of war from. The natural means in war was consequently physical force. Moral force was part of the state-concept and civilized life. To accomplish the natural purpose of war one had to make the enemy '*wehrlos*', defenceless, which indicated to Clausewitz the natural and conceptual aim of warlike action. This was what war 'could be and should logically do', even if it had

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<sup>1149</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', Vom Kriege 1:1, 191-213, cf. 191-92. 'Der Krieg ist also ein Akt der Gewalt, um den Gegner zur Erfüllung unseres Willens zu zwingen.'

been experienced only a few times. This natural aim was otherwise mostly modified from outer circumstances.

(3) Clausewitz continued to elaborate warlike element derived from his old historical interpretation. The utmost use of force was still his theoretical starting point, having viewed the engineering principle of war as theoretical distortion. This view had tended to believe in moral and scientific progress to make war more humane as well as more productive, and that overthrowing an enemy was possible with artistic finesse at a minor cost. With the imbalance of his youth in mind he stated that the party ready to use force to the utmost had preponderance (*Übergewicht* cf. equilibrium) over an enemy not prepared to do so.

The law of thought for action (*Gesetz*) was given by the actual enemy, thus neither by past experience nor by moral conventions or progress. The 'raw element' (*rohes Element* cf. *Wesen*) was similar among civilized and less civilized people. It appeared from context and was predisposed by the actual conflict and given to war as indicated in the revised Book 2. To include the principle of reduction *a priori* in the concept of war would consequently be a theoretical absurdity, because enmity and tension emanated from the underlying conflict and were not part of war *per se*.

Röder was told that hate and enmity coincided with *Politik* in really hot conflict. The Enlightenment way of military thinking had included intellectual limitations and narrowed the view of war to a tiny matter of *Kriegskunst*. Consequently its exponents were intellectually unprepared for the level of brutality, energy and force mustered by the revolutionary forces. The scope of war was given by the conflict and context, thus from *Politik* in its broader sense. Clausewitz made a distinction to explain this view of *Politik* on the warlike element, suggesting that fighting (*Kampf*) among people was in reality composed of two separate elements:

Fighting among humans really consist of two distinct elements, the hostile feeling and the hostile intention. We have chosen the latter of these two elements as attributes of our definition because it is the general. One cannot think the coarsest thing, based on instinct, almost the passion of hate, without a hostile intention; on the other hand many hostile intentions are not, or very little, accompanied by dominating hostile feelings. Among primitive peoples these are ruled by temper, among civilized [*gebildete*] intention rules as part of reason. The difference *per se* does not lie in the nature of rawness and *Bildung*, but in the accompanying circumstances and directions etc.: it [the hostile feeling] is thus not necessary in every single case; it dominates only the majority of cases [recent?]: in a word even the most civilized people can become inflamed with passion against each other. One sees from this how untrue it would be if one reduced war among civilized people to a governmental act of pure reason [cf. the misleading interpretation of Clausewitz's dictum] and always thought war more as released from passion, so that he [war] in the end would not really need the physical mass of fighting forces [cf. Book 3-4] but only their conditions as a kind of algebra of action [cf. *Kriegskunst* in a political vacuum].<sup>1150</sup>

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<sup>1150</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 193. 'Der Kampf zwischen Menschen besteht eigentlich aus zwei verschiedenen Elementen,

Clausewitz wanted to make clear that it was wrong to think of war as a sterile military act of *Kriegskunst*, as the professional literature implied. It was equally untrue to view war one-sidedly as reduced to a pure act of political reason, even among civilized states, a neat act driven just by responsible governments (*bloßen Verstandesakt der Regierungen*) separated from the impact of passion from the masses. If war was an act of force it had also a disposition. The limitation of instinctive brutality was not a question of education, moral and scientific progress, but of the importance and duration of hostile interest.

The warlike tendency of '*Vernichtung des Gegners*' emanating from the 'raw element' was therefore foremost a matter of intelligent calculation and so, limitation. Clausewitz maintained his first proposition; that war is an act of force, the intelligent use of combat to achieve a purpose. Contending action involving life and death implied *per se* intensification, or escalation, which he labelled the first '*Wechselwirkung*', reciprocal action/effect. Clausewitz's rethinking of escalation was divided into three reciprocities to indicate that warlike energy is difficult to theoretically confine and determine *a priori*. It conceptualizes the uncertainty of effects from a military effort, i.e. that defeat can strengthen as well as weaken the opponent's resistance power. Escalation in terms of the scale of the warlike element is not subject to any absolute determinations; thus the concept of *Spannung*, tension, indicates a scale with no clear terminus that fuels a warlike effort differently.

(4) To render the enemy defenceless was the aim of the warlike act in theory. Clausewitz elaborated the basics of coercion with the view of war as intelligent calculation in mind. One had to put the enemy in a more unfavourable situation than the sacrifice, i.e. the prize, for peace. This unfavourable situation had to appear as stable and permanent, impossible to wait out into more favourable terms, as his concept of defence had suggested. The prospect of change from further warlike action had to appear in a strategic estimate as unfavourable, at least to the enemy strategist and those who steered action. Clausewitz concluded that the second proposition of intensification was derived from insecurity:

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dem feindseligen Gefühl und der feindseligen Absicht. Wir haben das letztere dieser beiden Elemente zum Merkmal unserer Definition gewählt, weil es das allgemeine ist. Man kann sich auch die roheste, an Instinkt grenzende Leidenschaft des Hasses nicht ohne feindliche Absicht denken, dagegen gibt es viele feindselige Absichten, die von gar keiner oder wenigstens von keiner vorherrschenden Feindschaft der Gefühle begleitet sind. Bei rohen Völkern herrschen die dem Gemüt, bei Gebildeten die dem Verstande angehörenden Absichten vor; allein dieser Unterschied liegt nicht in dem Wesen von Roheit und Bildung selbst, sondern in den sie begleitenden Umständen, Einrichtungen usw.: er ist also nicht notwendig in jedem einzelnen Fall, sondern er beherrscht nur die Mehrheit der Fälle, mit einem Wort: auch die gebildetsten Völker können gegeneinander leidenschaftlich entbrennen. Man sieht hieraus, wie unwahr man sein würde, wenn man den Krieg der Gebildeten auf einen bloßen Verstandesakt der Regierungen zurückführen und ihn sich immer mehr als von aller Leidenschaft loslassend denken wollte, so daß er zuletzt die physischen Massen der Streitkräfte nicht wirklich mehr brauchte, sondern nur ihre Verhältnisse, eine Art Algebra des Handelns.'

As long as I have not overthrown the enemy, I must fear that he will overthrow me; thus I am no longer in control of my situation, instead he gives me '*das Gesetz*' (cf. Kant: my necessary rule of being), as I give him. This is the *second Wechselwirkung* [reciprocal action and effect], which is bound for *the second utmost*.<sup>1151</sup>

(5) Clausewitz returned to the concept of '*abmessen*', gauge, to explain overthrow further, it being first clearly put forward in Book 4 and the study of the Russian Campaign of 1824. The purpose of overthrow to dictate peace implied a polarised warlike act, which he framed as a '*Widerstandskraft abmessen*', steady gauge of the strength of resistance. Fighting power in all forms was always a timely product to Clausewitz, foremost composed of the available size of physical means and the actor's moral magnitude as set forth in Book 3.

The former was easier to determine and the latter more elusive, but best estimated according to the strength of motive: 'Granted, we obtain in this way a tolerable probability of enemy resistance power, so we can gauge our effort and make this either as grand, so it outweighs, or if our capability is not sufficient, as great as possible.'<sup>1152</sup> The problem in making strategy was, however, that the enemy had the same possibility to intellectually estimate the probability of effort. To Clausewitz this proved the presence of a third latent intensification of effort from the mind thinking strategy.

Altogether, the threefold conception of *Wechselwirkungen* bound for unclear intensification emanating from the 'raw element' – thus the warlike element depicted the absence of fixed *a priori* values in strategic thought. It consequently deprived older theory of its logical justification to suggest fixed military patterns or models *per se*. (6) Clausewitz turned to 'real life modifications' of the warlike element, to improve his case even further. He noticed the outline of the utmost tended to look like a conflict of forces just following their internal conceptual laws, which was remote from reality.

To derive an absolute point of the warlike aim from conceptual deduction became improper quiddity. It projected war as a continual reciprocity that would easily panic when faced with the extreme. Such a result became more or less the same as the military models he refuted, which circumvented every practical difficulty with a few sentences. To adopt the utmost effort willy-nilly as a new practical standard would only be another book-law and nothing for real-world strategy, and lead to a waste of

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<sup>1151</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege*, 191-213, cf. 195. 'Solange ich den Gegner nicht niedergeworfen habe, muß ich fürchten, daß er mich niederwirft, ich bin also nicht mehr Herr meiner, sondern er gibt mir das Gesetz, wie ich es ihm gebe. Dies ist *die zweite Wechselwirkung, die zum zweiten Äußersten führt*'

<sup>1152</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege*, 191-213, cf. 195. 'Gesetzt, wir bekämen auf diese Weise eine erträgliche Wahrscheinlichkeit für die Widerstandskraft des Gegners, so können wir danach unsere Anstrengungen abmessen und diese entweder so groß machen, daß sie überwiegen, oder, im Fall dazu unser Vermögen nicht hinreicht, so groß wie möglich.'

effort. This logic of the warlike element had to find a counterweight in the precepts of *Regierungskunst*, thus in statecraft.

Clausewitz depicted three modifications of the warlike element to remove the prospect of pinning down the absolute from conceptual logic. (7) His first argument was that war was never an isolated act between abstract persons and organisations. War was not instant; instead it arose from an underlying conflict in a context known to the contenders. On principle, human imperfection reduced war behind the line of absolute best. (8) Decision was not direct in war, not one instant strike without duration. A set of successive decisions was of course possible, faintly moving the abstract and real worlds somewhat closer. Forces were however complex, ranging from the balance of power, terrain, mobile forces, inhabitants, allies to political relations and so on. A complete fusion of these forces was simply against the nature of war. (9) Consequently, war and its result were never absolutes but something more of a temporary evil for a state overthrown, which could be used politically later. This concluded the first part of his analysis; explicating the warlike element by distilling fundamental dynamics and necessary modifications via combined structures in real life.

(10) The conceptual clarification of the warlike element derived from the *Urbestimmung* in terms of intensification and reciprocal effects (cf. *Äußersten und Absoluten der Begriffe*) must be modified by probability in real life. The enemy was not a pure concept but personified political entities, and this had to replace the conceptual determination depicted in the initial model. For strategic thought war was an individual, a peculiar course of action in *Gestalt* (*eigentlich gestaltender Verlauf der Handlung*).<sup>1153</sup>

This relied on the initial view of Book 8 defining war as variable *Spannung*, thus as tension between separated elements. The strategic estimate should transform available data of the unknown into the expected by estimating character, conditions, relations, aims and directions to grasp the probability of enemy action. This estimation of tension was the foundation for a course of action. (11) At this point Clausewitz re-introduced the importance of grasping the political purpose, the original motive, to personify war so as to grasp to better the likelihood of action and events. Simply put, a smaller demand or sacrifice would in theory be easier to obtain.

The political purpose was to be seen as a yardstick or measure (*Maß*) for the strategist to develop a course of action. But, Clausewitz fully recognized that the effect of this purpose affected people differently. 'One and the same political purpose can among different peoples, or even among one and the same people, at different times cause very different effects. We can thus only consider the political purpose valid as a measure, when we in him [purpose of war] also ponder *the effect on the masses which*

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<sup>1153</sup> The old German word *Gestalt* had many meanings similar to limited visible structure, form or figure. Later has the term indicated an isolated structured whole that cannot be reduced to the quality of its parts. Cf. the term phenomenology to designate the study of phenomenal experience.

he is to move, so the nature of these masses is part of the observation.’<sup>1154</sup> The principles for strengthening or weakening action could become very different indeed. The larger function of the political purpose of a war into motivation for combat explained to Clausewitz the variety of intensity, from *Vernichtungskrieg* to a war of observation.

(12) The old problem of standstill, no movement of the whole, was brought into the argument. Every action needed time to bring effect, sometimes shorter and sometimes longer. This time of effect was the *Dauer*, the duration of gaining effect. A more rapid effect was not to be considered better *per se* than a slower. This view was of course a result of his understanding of defence, in which the moment of ‘awaiting’ was vital to gain momentum in broad sense for a switch to the offensive. Swift action had however always been the trademark of his initial idea of the warlike element. (13-14) Clausewitz refuted the explanation of standstill as a pure product of military equilibrium; that the one pursuing the positive purpose with the stronger motive had too few forces to accomplish his desire. The continuity of action was not as simple as the theoretical analysis suggested.

(15-16) The concept of polarity was not valid if the interests at stake were not opposite. Clausewitz referred to a chapter about polarity, which was part of the draft of Book 2 but never printed in the final *Vom Kriege*, which indicates that book 2 was revised after this essay was written.<sup>1155</sup> This part was a refutation of a popular rule in military discourse that suggested one should do the opposite to enemy action (*Die Regel des Gegentheils*). A battle could be a true polarity as victory was the opposite of defeat. However this was not the same in strategy, since the same thing was usually not in question. The polarity for strategy was instead situated in the relation of different things. The old *Grundvorstellung* had conceptualized war as one thing in a philosophical sense: more or less to establish a firm platform for logical analysis and argumentation. This platform was constructed on the idea of polarised action, war compressed as one thing with inherent reciprocity possible to map.

The trouble of conceptualising defence had by 1826-1827 at the latest changed his mind in this particular respect. The solution – to approach strategy as a twofold way of war – had exposed the weak logic of action close to equilibrium. Strategic manoeuvring had been described as lacking all regularity, thus the warlike logic was weak indeed. This had made him realize the need for change in the *Grundvorstellung*, which induced the expanded role of *Politik* to save the coherence of war. The concept of polarity was consequently not applicable to defence and attack, since they were different things of unequal strength.

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<sup>1154</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], ‘Was ist der Krieg’, *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 200. ‘Ein und derselbe politische Zweck kann bei verschiedenen Völkern, oder selbst bei ein und demselben Volk, zu verschiedenen Zeiten ganz *verschiedene* Wirkungen hervorbringen. Wir können also den politischen Zweck nur so als das Maß gelten lassen, indem wir uns ihn *in Einwirkungen auf die Massen denken, die er bewegen soll*, so daß also die Natur dieser Massen in Betrachtung kommt.’

<sup>1155</sup> Cf. Clausewitz [1817-23], ‘5tes Kapitel Polarität der gegenseitigen Absichten im Kriege’, *Schriften* (1990), 661-62. This suggests that the final revision of Book 2 took place at least partly after the new *Grundvorstellung* was explicated.



(17-20) The effect of polarity was often destroyed by the natural superiority of defence, which sufficiently explained standstill. Clausewitz added incomplete situational awareness as a further reduction that underpinned standstill. The slower the act of war proceeded, the weaker the hostile motives at work, and the easier it was to correct strategic mistakes. However, frequent standstill in the warlike act dimmed theoretical logic and moved war and hence strategy towards the probability calculus. Clausewitz introduced at this point the element of chance to move war even further from any objective nature. This made war into a *Spiel*, a game, subjecting the strategist to chance. War in the sense of strategy was again more about the approximate than the absolute.

(21) The subjective nature of war was how real people acted and moved in the realm of danger, thus coping with the atmosphere of war. This was a matter of virtue like the ones described in Book 3 such as courage, boldness, faith, trust in fortune and the ability to take risks. Clausewitz again took the opportunity to criticize the inclination in military discourse to expound the 'absolute', the mathematical estimate of strategy. This subjective nature or human side made activities in war similar to a game of cards. (22) What could then theory do for the strategist? 'Should theory leave him [war for the strategist] here to move on smugly in absolute keys and rules? Then theory is of no practical utility.'<sup>1156</sup> Clausewitz answered exactly as he had done in the first *Grundvorstellung*. Theory had to allow the approximate some latitude, a *Spielraum*.

(23) This concluded the part of combined structures; this was war, the *Feldherr* and the theory ruling him. Clausewitz continued into stage three of the analysis to put the whole into context by stating that war was no pastime, no pure desire for adventure and success, no work of free enthusiasm. It was instead a serious means for a serious purpose. The game and all its forms and different human aspects were only peculiarities of this means. '*Der Krieg einer Gemeinschaft*', war as a meanness or villainy, arose from a political condition, from political motives among civilized people.

War did not solve tension by one discharge, like a shell or mine unable to change direction. This was however the false way ruling strategic thought (cf. the current understanding of centre of gravity). Consequently, for strategy war was to be thought of as a political act. That means Clausewitz modified his analytical perspective, away from the *Urbestimmung* modified in reality to make clear potential dynamics. Clausewitz stated now that war in the real world was 'the effect of forces that do not develop themselves perfectly simultaneously and similarly.'<sup>1157</sup> War appeared out of a political condition that provided motive and energy for action, which strategic thought must observe.

(24) The strategist should therefore think of war not only as a political act but also as a political instrument, as a continuation of the '*politischer Verkehr*', political intercourse. This meant that the energy to make war would fluctuate in society. The instrument

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<sup>1156</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 208

<sup>1157</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 209. '...ist das Wirken von Kräften, die nicht vollkommen gleichartig und gleichmäßig sich entwickeln...'

available to the strategist would be charged differently due to the political condition of conflict-bringing-forth action. The implication was that one could not wage war à la mode de Bonaparte if situational energy was not present in available forces. The purpose and means specified by the warlike aim had to balance the continuation of the situation. *Politik* was thus not only about the purpose desired by the political ruler but also in a broader meaning about crossing over into the condition of conflict and general motivation for combat. *Politik* was to be thought of as a modification of the warlike aim. This was similar to his old way of thinking but now expanded and more clearly explained.

(25-26) He modified now the notion of *Politik* to fit his new standpoint. This subtle modification of doctrine made all warlike action political action. Here we have perhaps one reason why Clausewitz treated *Politik* theoretically as he had done up to this point. Convinced by the French Revolution and Bonaparte, he had objected to the doctrine of *Politik* as 'pure reason'. The element of *Politik* explained to Clausewitz the differences of war in experience. Reality would approach the abstract *Gestalt* of war the stronger the motives for war grew: the more war affected people in general the greater the tension from conflict. The tendency was for utmost violent tension, accumulated in conflict, to make political purpose and warlike aim coincide, as described to Röder. On the other hand weaker motives brought forward less tension: 'the less the natural direction of the warlike element, namely force, falls into the line *Politik* provides, the more must war therefore be diverted from his natural direction, the greater difference the political purpose is from the aim of an ideal war the more war appears to be political.'<sup>1158</sup>

However if we return to the main question, seemingly if it is also true that *Politik* entirely disappears in one way of war while it quite clearly steps forward in the other, one can anyway claim that both ways are equally political; for if one observes *Politik* as the intelligence of the personified state, one must [reasonably] under all constellations yet include everyone who has composed the [political] calculus, behind the nature of all circumstances that conditions the first *Art* [kind/way of war]. Only insofar as one understands by *Politik* not a general insight but the conventional concept of a person who shuns force, is cautious, shifty, also dishonest cunning, could the latter *Art* [kind/way] of war belong more to it [*Politik*] than the former.<sup>1159</sup>

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<sup>1158</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 211. '...um so weniger wird die natürliche Richtung des kriegerischen Elementes, nämlich der Gewalt, in die Linie fallen, welche die Politik gibt, um so mehr muß also der Krieg von seiner natürlichen Richtung abgelenkt werden, um so verschiedener ist der politische Zweck von dem Ziel eines idealen Krieges, um so mehr scheint der Krieg *politisch* zu werden.'

<sup>1159</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 211. 'Wenn es also, um zur Hauptsache zurückzukehren, auch wahr ist, daß bei der einen Art Krieg die Politik ganz zu verschwinden scheint, während sie bei der anderen Art sehr bestimmt hervortritt, so kann man doch behaupten, daß die eine so politisch sei wie die andere; denn betrachtet man die Politik wie die Intelligenz des personifizierten Staates, so muß unter allen Konstellationen, die ihr Kalkül aufzufassen hat, doch auch diejenige begriffen sein können, wo die Natur aller Verhältnisse einen Krieg der ersten Art bedingt. Nur insofern man

(27-28) The strategist had always to think of war as joined to *Politik* in the broader sense, never as a separate thing like the many accounts of systems and principles typical of military engineering. The most important act of strategic judgement collectively by the statesman and the commander was to recognise the war that was undertaken truly in this sense. Otherwise one could make false assumptions about war, be tempted to make a war into something it could not be according to the nature of the particular conflict. Thus, set out a political purpose and strategic aim not in harmony with circumstances. This way of thinking about war made the strategic point of view clearer and the history of war understandable.

Clausewitz's intention was to elaborate this further in Book 8. The investigation was concluded by comparing war with a chameleon and suggesting an exceedingly difficult task for the making of strategic theory. A theory to support strategic thought had to stay '*schwebend*', stay hovering in between three dynamic tendencies so as not to become untrue and turn into pure speculation. Modern works usually translate Clausewitz's description of war as '*wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*' with the words 'wondrous trinity', among others, as described in chapter one. Michael Howard recently suggested 'amazing', but stated he was open for suggestions.<sup>1160</sup> The present work suggests 'fickle trinity', which better conveys the temper and unpredictably Clausewitz tried to project about war when theorizing strategic thought:

*Der Krieg* [the concept of war] is not only a true chameleon, since he [war] in every concrete case changes his nature slightly, but he is also as a whole appearance a fickle trinity, a relation of three ruling tendencies [cf. Book 8:2]. These are composed of the original intensity of hate and hostility from his [warlike] element which is to be considered as a blind instinct, of probability and chance that make him a free activity of talent [the soul], and of the subordinate nature as a political tool that falls prey to pure reason [observe the irony of political-moral doctrine to include different rationalities in *anheimfällt*]. The first side of the three is more turned towards the people, the second more towards the commander and his army and the third more towards the government. The passions that should be inflamed in war must already be present among the people [cf. French Revolution]; the scale that the play of temper and talent assume in the haul of chance among probabilities depends on the peculiarities of the commander and the army, the political purposes belong to the government alone.

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unter Politik nicht eine allgemeine Einsicht, sondern den *konventionellen* Begriff einer der Gewalt abgewendeten, behutsamen, verschlagenen, auch unredlichen Klugheit versteht, könnte die letzte Art des Krieges ihr mehr angehören als die erstere.'

<sup>1160</sup> Howard, 'Foreword Clausewitz's On War: A History of the Howard-Paret Translation', *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, v-vii

These three tendencies, that likewise appear as very different *Gesetzgebungen* [laws of thought cf. Kant: my necessary rule of being] are deeply rooted in the matter and at the same time of changing magnitude. A theory that leaves these [tendencies] unconsidered or sets forth a conditional relation between them would instantly be lost in such contraction of reality that the very suggestion must be considered eliminated through this alone. Consequently, the problem is to keep a theory hovering between these three tendencies as between three *Anziehungspunkten* [fig. for points of intellectual attraction or cynosures].<sup>1161</sup>

Howard & Paret suggested a translation to expose war as a subordinated fine-tuned instrument: 'and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.'<sup>1162</sup> Their translation conforms to the traditional doctrine of *Politik*, depicting war as subject to political reason with the undertone of sensible. Clausewitz's text is cruder: 'und aus der untergeordneten Natur eines politischen Werkzeuges, wodurch er *dem bloßen Verstande* anheimfällt.' The proper translation to catch Clausewitz's irony and modified view of political doctrine is: 'and from the subordinate nature of a political tool through which he [war] falls prey to *pure reason*.' War cannot choose a political master and therefore '*anheimfällt*' should be translated as 'falls prey to *pure reason*', which stresses his irony regarding the doctrine of *Politik* as always sensible and just. '*Werkzeug*' can be translated as 'instrument', but the rougher term 'tool' seems more appropriate; in addition, referring to means, it can also be translated as 'medium'. In that sense, war was a tool for *Politik* and as such a 'victim' of different rationalities and behaviours that did not necessarily conform to traditional moral and political doctrine.

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<sup>1161</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 212-13. 'Der Krieg ist also nicht nur ein wahres Chamäleon, weil er in jedem konkreten Falle seine Natur etwas ändert, sondern er ist auch seinen Gesamterscheinungen nach, in Beziehung auf die in ihm herrschenden Tendenzen eine wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit, zusammengesetzt aus der ursprünglichen Gewaltsamkeit seines Elementes, dem Haß und der Feindschaft, die wie ein *blinder Naturtrieb* anzusehen sind, aus dem Spiel der Wahrscheinlichkeiten und des Zufalls, die ihn zu einer *freien Seelentätigkeit* machen, und aus der untergeordneten Natur eines politischen Werkzeuges, wodurch er *dem bloßen Verstande* anheimfällt. Die erste dieser drei Seiten ist mehr dem Volke, die zweite mehr dem Feldherrn und seinem Heer, die dritte mehr der Regierung zugewendet. Die Leidenschaften, welche im Kriege entbrennen sollen, müssen schon in den Völkern vorhanden sein; der Umfang, welchen das Spiel des Mutes und Talents im Reiche der Wahrscheinlichkeiten des Zufalls bekommen wird, hängt von der Eigentümlichkeit des Feldherrn und des Heeres ab, die politischen Zwecke aber gehören der Regierung allein an. Diese drei Tendenzen, die als ebenso viele verschiedene Gesetzgebungen erscheinen, sind tief in der Natur des Gegenstandes gegründet und zugleich von veränderlicher Größe. Eine Theorie, welche eine derselben unberücksichtigt lassen oder zwischen ihnen ein willkürliches Verhältnis feststellen wollte, würde augenblicklich mit der Wirklichkeit in solchen Widerspruch geraten, daß sie dadurch allein schon wie vernichtet betrachtet werden müßte. Die Aufgabe ist also, daß sich die Theorie zwischen diesen drei Tendenzen wie zwischen drei Anziehungspunkten schwebend erhalte.'

<sup>1162</sup> According to Howard & Paret: Clausewitz, *On War*, 89

Consequently, Clausewitz wished to make a theoretical point about the mismatch he had perceived throughout his life between visions of *Politik* in doctrine and hard-core political realities. War was driven by different rationalities, and, sometimes, war became a broader expression of *Politik*, driven by hate rather than reason. The doctrine of *Politik* had to accept a span of political behaviours and moral attitudes to underpin proper strategic thought. It is plausible that the perception of disconnected visions and realities underlay his treatment of *Politik* up to this point.

To keep the theory '*schwebend*', hovering, was indeed a difficult problem, which he was going to investigate further in Book 2 on the theory of war. The new enquiry clarified the concept of war sufficiently as a basic foundation for theory. It helped to categorize the mass of experience and make important distinctions. The theoretical challenge posed by these three tendencies was described as they generate very different laws of thought (*viele verschiedene Gesetzgebungen*) of fluctuating magnitudes. A theory to guide proper strategic thought must not predetermine any values and predominance of any of the three if it is to reflect reality. Instead, it must stay hovering in between these three *Anziehungspunkten*, points of intellectual attraction. We should ponder Clausewitz's depiction of the theoretical challenge as well as his salient forecast of shortcomings in later interpretations and theorising of strategy. The last chapter will discuss this important part in more details.

The next chapter continued to elaborate the consequence of this new ontology of war for purpose and means. The old outline of Book 1 had elaborated the purpose of war as an act of force in the meaning of the *Grundvorstellung* itself. Consequently, the second chapter had put forward combat as the means of war *per se*. The new chapter two underlined instead the '*zusammengesetzte und veränderliche Natur des Krieges*', thus the compound and changing nature of war that appeared from the new view of the ontology of war. The text elaborated and expanded more or less the double way of war for strategy into '*vielerlei Wege zum Ziel*', thus into all kinds of ways.<sup>1163</sup> This fits the model of action I suggested for grasping Clausewitz's thought after Book 7 was sketched, which must have been very near in time.

First, the purpose and means in war with conditions applicable to the highest aim of overthrowing the enemy were pondered. To annihilate enemy fighting forces was to put the enemy in such a position that fighting was no longer possible. In addition occupy territory if necessary to counter rearmament. If the will of the enemy was not coerced despite successful overthrow and peace dictated, the strategist had to ponder the future course of action.

The reason for continuing resistance was that the effects of fighting and hostile tension were not depleted. Fighting in the interior of the country, plus allied support to resist the enemy even after peace, were possible courses of action. This only proved that no complete decision to make the enemy defenceless as the original abstraction had suggested was possible in every war. The consequence was that this condition cannot be adopted as a theoretical law of thought for strategy: a new standpoint hardly observed in the literature.

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<sup>1163</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], '*Zweck und Mittel im Kriege*', *Vom Kriege* 1:2,214-30

The purpose of war derived purely from the warlike element did not match real war perfectly, which the investigation of the *Grundvorstellung* had elaborated. Had there been a perfect match, war between states of unequal powers would have been absurd and impossible. A.D.H. Bülow had suggested prior to 1806 exactly this model – that power was just a matter of size and numbers, to which Clausewitz had then objected by explicating the role of imponderables and moral forces.

Two further motives for peace clearly present in reality had to supplement the condition of defencelessness, or incapability, *Unfähigkeit*, of further resistance. These motives were improbability of success and a price of success that was too high. Clausewitz argued that the whole of war was released from a conceptual inner strict law of thought. Success was not bound to overthrow. Clausewitz now argued instead to exploit probability even more, not to take the longer way via overthrow if this was unnecessary. Previously his ambition had seemingly been to theoretically eliminate, or at least limit, the role of chance to play as safely as possible via his theory, and this had led to the 'device'. His initial theory had more or less focused on victory, as the currency for playing safe in strategy. This was only valid for high aims and tense conditions, when only final victory counted.

War was not an act of blind passion. The political purpose must instead ponder how great a sacrifice was justified. As soon as the sacrifice exceeded the value of the purpose the equilibrium would be lost. The need for peace would undoubtedly arise in either form. The cost and improbability of success would make a political compromise to settle peace possible. The one with the weakest motives for peace would have the best possibility to profit. Clausewitz's continued with questions of how to increase the probability of success. If one was sure that the enemy would not pursue the highest aim of overthrow one could contemplate enterprises with a direct political impact, as a shorter way. A second question for the strategist to ponder was how to raise the price for an enemy's *Kraftaufwand*, thus the expenditure of force.

Clausewitz took on the task of showing that other routes to the aim were possible without contradiction. A first was temporary invasion, to take temporary control of provinces for economic profit or to defeat forces to simply hurt a political opponent. A second way was to exploit hurt and damage further. A third way was to *ermüden*, thus to tire the enemy, to exhaust physical power by the duration of action. In military discourse apparently some methods were described as military and some as more political. Clausewitz objected to this way of thinking. All ways were equally military if they fulfilled the political purpose. Thus, he refuted the inclination of military thought to value the form and ideals in favour of political productivity.

To underline the relation he returned to the law of thought outlined in the first version of Book 2 but never printed in *Vom Kriege*. This described the dynamic between magnitude and security of success (*Größe und Sicherheit des Erfolgs*). A small purpose was easier to attain than a larger and so on. A whole range of purposes arose from human intercourse for the strategist to exploit as a shorter way to the aim. Clausewitz labelled these by the Latin phrase '*argumentum ad hominem*', argument against person, to create and utilize a psychological advantage in human intercourse. These made the number of ways to the strategic aim infinite.

Despite this array of ways fighting (*Kampf*) in some form remained the single means in war, individualized in a structure of real and possible combats. Clausewitz repeated his old logic of fighting forces, concluding that action to achieve a political purpose in war was subordinated to one highest rule of strategic thought (*höchster Gesetz*) in terms of decision by arms. This event was in the end the 'Supreme Court' of international politics (*höchsten Gerichtshof*). This was a counterargument to Kant's idea of a federation of states to maintain peace, or more precisely to moral conventions as theoretical norm; since moral conventions were a free choice and not formal necessary *per se*.<sup>1164</sup> His standpoint did not of course exclude practical obedience, but it was a political and moral matter. One should remember that he regarded wars after the French Revolution as broken loose from conventional bounds, as raw violence had taken the place of traditional political courtesy. Today's conventions did not of course obtain, so the framework was quite different in comparison.

The text on the warlike genius was modified with a part about *Politik*, referring to the revised chapter one. The ability to overcome general friction in the conduct of war, thus to cope with the atmosphere of war, had been the main theme of genius earlier. Clausewitz now put forward a military commander conducting war in a political sense: 'We argue: the commander becomes a statesman, but he must never cease to be the first; he considers on one hand all conditions of the state, on the other he is exactly aware of what he can perform with the means in his hand.'<sup>1165</sup> The higher faculties emphasized were unity of mind and judgement to cope with all conflicting views and distinguish the important. Compare to the idea of the fickle trinity.

Clausewitz addressed also the impact of the element of *Politik* in the broader sense in two texts placed in Book 8. The first elaborated the influence of the political purpose on the warlike aim and the second clarified military strategic thinking of when war was fully viewed as an instrument of *Politik*.<sup>1166</sup> The first piece sketched the implications of the Concert of Europe, the political framework of security treaties and confederations with Metternich as architect to secure the European balance of power. A military effort to support an ally within this framework was considered a confederative act and not literally war. Action was taken without declarations of war or peace. Clausewitz observed the poverty of these concepts and the faulty use of them in practical daily language.

The political use of force within this type of framework 'embarrassed' a theory of war expecting inner coherence. Every force would have its own commander responsible to the court of his country, which blurred intentions. The opponent was not viewed as an enemy to annihilate; instead the course of events became more of a *Handelsgeschäft*, a commercial transaction. This way of coalition warfare was common, but a logical

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<sup>1164</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Zweck und Mittel im Kriege', *Vom Kriege* 1:2, 214-30, cf. 229

<sup>1165</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Kriegerische Genius', *Vom Kriege* 1:3, 231-52, cf. 251. 'Wir sagen: der Feldherr wird zum Staatsmann, aber er darf nicht aufhören, das erstere zu sein; er umfaßt mit seinem Blick auf der einen Seite alle Staatsverhältnisse, auf der anderen ist er sich genau bewußt, was er mit den Mitteln leisten kann, die in seiner Hand liegen...'

<sup>1166</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Einfluss des Politischen Zweckes auf das Kriegerische Ziel', *Vom Kriege* 8:6a, 987-89; 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege*, 8:6b, 990-98

inconsistency not to overlook: 'It is a *Halbheit*, an anomaly, because war and peace are basically concepts not capable of any gradation; but it has nevertheless not a pure diplomatic origin that reason can ignore, instead it is grounded in the natural limitation and weakness of mankind.'<sup>1167</sup> This explanation had been offered before to explain the fallacy in strategic thought of avoiding clear thinking about one's destiny.

When the political purpose was allowed to fully influence the warlike aim, it was obvious that any philosophical construction striving to clarify war as coherence for strategic theory was in a really embarrassing situation when the necessary faded away. Clausewitz's way out was simple and salient indeed: 'The more a reducing principle enters the warlike act, and even more, the weaker the motives for action, the more action is transformed into [political] suffering, the less takes place, the less it needs guiding *Grundsätze*. The whole of *Kriegskunst* transforms itself into mere prudence.'<sup>1168</sup>

The naval battle of Navarino took place outside the Peloponnese peninsula on 20 November 1827 during the Greek War of Independence in 1821-1832, which seems to be the approximate time for this text. A combined naval force from Ottoman and Egypt was destroyed by an allied naval force from Britain, France and Russia. Clausewitz told Gneisenau four days later that he was unable to predict the course of victory. His puzzle reflected the problem of '*Halbheit*'; how to think strategy within political alliances, as he discusses in this text about the war plan:

The battle of Navarin has made a great sensation here as everywhere...The bad thing is that the friends of the Greeks cannot tell their opponents quite right how this victory will contribute to their salvation and the entire treaty of the three powers is such a political *Halbheit* that one can impossibly bring harmony to such a battle and consider victory as a result of a stable plan: it appears instead as an irregular explosion that the victor is probably not less terrified about than the defeated. It seems to me impossible to decipher the course of events. None of the coalition powers is prepared for war, no one seems to have any desire for this which they consider only as a matter of honour, but with the risk of large casualties; and nobody seems to know how one should think the common aim properly.<sup>1169</sup>

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<sup>1167</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Einfluss des Politischen Zweckes auf das Kriegerische Ziel', *Vom Kriege* 8:6a, 987-89, cf. 988. 'Sie ist eine Halbheit, eine Anomalie, denn Krieg und Friede sind im Grunde Begriffe, die keiner Gradation fähig sind; aber sie ist nichtsdestoweniger kein bloßes diplomatisches Herkommen, über welches sich die Vernunft hinwegsetzen könnte, sondern tief in der natürlichen Beschränktheit und Schwäche des Menschen gegründet.'

<sup>1168</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Einfluss des Politischen Zweckes auf das Kriegerische Ziel', *Vom Kriege* 8:6a, 987-89, cf. 989. 'Je mehr in den kriegerischen Akt ein ermäßigendes Prinzip kommt, oder vielmehr, je schwächer die Motive des Handelns werden, um so mehr geht das Handeln in ein Leiden über, um so weniger trägt sich zu, um so weniger bedarf es leitender Grundsätze. Die ganze Kriegskunst verwandelt sich in bloße Vorsicht'

<sup>1169</sup> Clausewitz to Gneisenau, Berlin 24 November 1827, *Schriften* (1990), 533-35, cf. 533. 'Die Schlacht bei *Navarin* hat hier, wie überall große Sensation gemacht...Die Schlimme ist, daß die Griechenfreunde ihren Gegnern allerdings nicht rechts sagen können wie dieser Sieg zu ihrer



In the next chapter of Book 8 Clausewitz continued to discuss the implication of fading logic, '*Halbheit*', for military thought. The *Zweispalt*, the two columns between the nature of war and the interest of individual people as well as communities was unsolvable via philosophical reason (*philosophische Verstand*). The only way to close the gap and philosophically neutralise the contradiction between the single elements was by making the concept of war part of *politischer Verkehr*, political intercourse, the element of *Politik* in broader terms. That adjustment united war into one concept again and dissolved the contradiction. Clausewitz justified his philosophical approach to strategy and his long-term work quite superficially, to save face:

We would have stipulated this unity from the beginning, if it had not been necessary to uncover every contradiction quite clearly and also consider the different elements separated. This unity is now the concept, that war is just one part of political intercourse, thus it is, throughout, nothing that stands on its own.<sup>1170</sup>

This was the place the adjustment was done literally. Clausewitz's term '*Verkehr*' has normally been translated as intercourse. In the German of that time it carried a broader meaning of having a conversation or a relation with somebody. It meant as well '*Handel und Wandel*' an expression for trade and traffic that brought to mind the image of a marketplace in movement.<sup>1171</sup> To finally refute military interpretations of war as a typified condition or as a situation subject to military scientific laws of thought, Clausewitz stipulated the simple but sophisticated meaning of 'continuation' for the strategist. The strategist had to think of war as a product, at a particular time, of the condition arising from political intercourse. This dissolved the prospect of uncovering an internal, complete and stable conceptual logic of war to think strategy properly.

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Rettung beitragen werde und daß der ganze Vertrag der drei Mächte eine solche politische Halbheit ist, daß man einen solchen Schlag unmöglich in eine Art Harmonie bringen und den Sieg wie das Resultat eines ständigen festen Planes betrachten kann, sondern daß er wie eine unregelmäßige Explosion erscheint, über die die Sieger vielleicht nicht weniger erschrocken sind als die Besiegten. Es erscheint mir [unmöglich] zu entziffern, was aus der Sache werden wird. Keine der verbundenden Mächte ist zum Kriege vorbereitet, keine scheint Lust zu haben dieser Sache, die sie doch nur wie eine Ehrensache ansehen große Opfer zu bringen, und keine scheint zu wissen, wie sie sich das gemeinschaftliche Ziel recht denken soll.'

<sup>1170</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf. 990. 'Wir würden diese Einheit gleich von vornherein aufgestellt haben, wenn es nicht notwendig gewesen wäre, eben jene Widersprüche recht deutlich hervorzuheben und die verschiedenen Elemente auch getrennt zu betrachten. Diese Einheit nun ist der Begriff, daß der Krieg nur ein Teil des politischen Verkehrs sei, also durchaus nichts Selbständiges.'

<sup>1171</sup> Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol. 4. (Leipzig: 1801), 1067-8 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.zeno.org/Adelung-1793/A/Verkehr,+der?hl=verkehr> accessed on 8 May 2012

Politics was not interested in any coherent consequences when war was made an instrument, only the immediate probability of action. This way of thinking made war an instrument of adaptable size from handy rapier to heavy dreadful sword. When war, hence the element of war, was part of the element of *Politik* it would adopt its character. Clausewitz made war a political consequence; so when *Politik* was grand and powerful war would follow suit and escalate towards its absolute *Gestalt*. War was not just a typical *Kriegszustand* for strategic thought:

One knows indeed that war will only be evoked through political intercourse [cf. trade and traffic] among governments and people; but usually one thinks the thing so that every intercourse ceases with war and an entirely different condition [*Zustand* cf. the moral discourse of natural right] arises, subject only to its own laws of thought. We argue against this, war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with the interference of other means. We say 'with the interference of other means', to indicate at the same time that this political intercourse is not stopped by war *per se*, it will not be transformed into something entirely different, on the contrary its essence is constant whatever *Gestalt* of the means it utilizes, and that the main lines along which the great warlike events proceed and are bound to are only its lineaments [cf. the *Nachricht* where the lineaments were missing]. These transmigrate through war into peace. And would anything else be thinkable? Do political relations between different people and governments cease with a suspension of diplomatic notes? Is not war just another way of text and speech to their [political] thinking? War has indeed his own grammar, but no logic [rationality] of his own.<sup>1172</sup>

This way of thinking was to Clausewitz the only way to unite war as one concept again, making it possible to consider all wars in history as a thing of one kind again in spite of being very different. The first way out constructed during the outline of defence in the double way of war was now dissolved. War as a coherent thing was saved for the strategist, but deprived of logic and fully subsumed under the element of *Politik*.

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<sup>1172</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf. 990-91. 'Man weiß freilich, daß der Krieg nur durch den politischen Verkehr der Regierungen und der Völker hervorgerufen wird; aber gewöhnlich denkt man sich die Sache so, daß mit ihm jener Verkehr aufhöre und ein ganz anderer Zustand eintrete, welcher nur seinen eigenen Gesetzen unterworfen sei. Wir behaupten dagegen, der Krieg ist nichts als eine Fortsetzung des politischen Verkehrs mit Einmischung anderer Mittel. Wir sagen mit Einmischung anderer Mittel, um damit zugleich zu behaupten, daß dieser politische Verkehr durch den Krieg selbst nicht aufhört, nicht in etwas ganz anderes verwandelt wird, sondern daß er in seinem Wesen fortbesteht, wie auch seine Mittel gestaltet sein mögen, deren er sich bedient, und daß die Hauptlinien, an welchen die kriegesischen Ereignisse fortlaufen und gebunden sind, nur seine Lineamente sind, die sich zwischen den Krieg durch bis zum Frieden fortziehen. Und wie wäre es anders denkbar? Hören denn mit den diplomatischen Noten je die politischen Verhältnisse verschiedener Völker und Regierungen auf? Ist nicht der Krieg bloß eine andere Art von Schrift und Sprache ihres Denkens? Er hat freilich seine eigene Grammatik, aber nicht seine eigene Logik.'

Clausewitz was very satisfied with himself because the absolute *Gestalt* of war, i.e. the warlike element, the risk of new Napoleonic reckless wars about which he wanted to warn future generations of Prussians, was now saved. The new way of thinking about *Politik* even amplified the relevance of the absolute *Gestalt* of war, so now: 'his image must even more hover perpetually in the background.'<sup>1173</sup> War integrated into the element of *Politik* became Clausewitz's theoretical platform for thinking strategy properly, which he had struggled to distil in the concept of war alone, thus from the warlike element.

The new construction provided strategic judgement with a correct and precise standpoint and viewpoint (*Stand und Gesichtspunkt*) to outline and evaluate the large projects of war and campaigns. This brought intellectual unity to thinking strategy cleverly, which he hoped would also eliminate the recurring rivalry of interests among politicians, civil servants and soldiers. It presumed a view of *Politik* as a pure *Sachwalter*, custodian of all individual interests against other states. *Politik* was a representative of all interests in society, but never for the *Kriegskunst*. The *Kriegskunst* should not have any interests, so the military commander was considered as preceptor (cf. lat. *Praeceptum*, in German *Vorschrift, Lehre*), thus as teacher, wisdom and advisor to the political ruler. This meant there could never be a military cause of war – never a military necessity.<sup>1174</sup>

Military education could not teach campaigning in a political vacuum according to military ideals. The popular military standpoint that politics should not interfere in the conduct of war was also refuted. In the same way it was inappropriate for governments to ask for purely military advice about a project, since there was no appropriate answer. The yardstick of military action was politics and the two had to be estimated together. The chief of the general staff, Müffling, was told: 'The problem and the right of the *Kriegskunst* are mainly to avoid politics demanding something that is against the nature of a war that they do wrong out of ignorance of the effect of the instrument.'<sup>1175</sup> A mismatch was not a harmful influence of *Politik* on war; instead, the problem was to be sought in faulty policy:

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<sup>1173</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf.992. 'vielmehr muß fortwährend sein Bild im Hintergrunde schweben'

<sup>1174</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf.993

<sup>1175</sup> Clausewitz to Müffling, [Autumn] 1827, cited in Frhr. v. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz aus den Feldzügen 1813 und 1814* (Berlin: Mittler, 1908), 16. 'Die Aufgabe und das Recht der Kriegskunst der Politik gegenüber ist hauptsächlich, zu verhüten, daß die Politik Dinge fordere, die gegen die Natur des Krieges sind, daß sie aus Unkenntnis über die Wirkungen des instruments fehler beuge im Gebrauch desselben.'

Only when politics promises an effect that is false according to the nature of certain warlike means and directions can the influence be harmful. As everyone that uses a language he does not command perfectly sometimes says a proper thought erroneously, so will politics often arrange matters that do not correspond to their intention. This happens very frequently and makes it obvious that a certain insight into the institution of war, about command, should not be separated from political intercourse.<sup>1176</sup>

It was suggested that the supreme commander be made a member of the Cabinet to be able to take part in their main moments of action.<sup>1177</sup> This was the best way to match war and *Politik* in strategy if the commander and the political ruler were not the same person. Marie's brother modified this passage when he prepared the second edition of *Vom Kriege* (1852). He was then a retired lieutenant-general and manipulated the text to subtly give the generals more influence than the original text allowed.<sup>1178</sup>

Clausewitz pointed once more that the cabinet had to follow the army in the field to achieve the appropriate speed in the decision-action loop for modern war. This was nothing novel. He had pointed to this model earlier in Book 3: thus had it worked in practice during the campaigns of 1813-1815. Officers who assumed a political role were criticised, which he illustrated with some examples of really bad performance. He upheld a clear line of responsibility between the military and the civilian in spite of thinking strategy as he did.

His point was finally illustrated by the mismatch of the military response to the aftermath of the French revolution. The twenty years of success for the Revolution were not the result of superior French military performance: the situation had been estimated and understood poorly. If the political situation had been estimated properly the military continuation of the Revolution would have been predictable. It would then have been possible to adopt an effective policy and make a strategy with the appropriate purpose and means in balance. The French success was therefore caused mainly by faulty policy in neighbouring countries. In addition the new French manner of war was produced by the new political conditions. To Clausewitz it was

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<sup>1176</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf.995. 'Nur dann, wenn die Politik sich von gewissen kriegesischen Mitteln und Maßregeln eine falsche, ihrer Natur nicht entsprechende Wirkung verspricht, kann sie mit ihren Bestimmungen einen schädlichen Einfluß auf den Krieg haben. Wie jemand in einer Sprache, der er nicht ganz gewachsen ist, mit einem richtigen Gedanken zuweilen Unrichtiges sagt, so wird die Politik dann oft Dinge anordnen, die ihrer eigenen Absicht nicht entsprechen. Dies ist unendlich oft vorgekommen, und dies macht es fühlbar, daß eine gewisse Einsicht in das Kriegswesen von der Führung des politischen Verkehrs nicht getrennt werden sollte.'

<sup>1177</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98, cf.996. '...obersten Feldherrn zum Mitglied des Kabinetts zu machen, damit dasselbe teil an den Hauptmomenten seines Handelns nehme'

<sup>1178</sup> See about the manipulation Gisbert Beyerhaus, 'Der ursprüngliche Clausewitz', *Wehrwissenschaftlichen Rundschau*, 3.Jg., H.3., (Darmstadt: Mittler & Sohn, 1953), 102-10; Hahlweg, 'Das Clausewitzbild einst und jetzt', in Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 70-73; Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 56-62

therefore obvious that *Politik* and war had to be viewed together as one joint product if strategy was to be thought properly.<sup>1179</sup>

## RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF THEORY

The existing set on theory was expanded and perhaps reorganised in the process to handle the theoretical challenge from the enquiry and adjustment of the *Grundvorstellung*. First at least one important text was added, in which Clausewitz pondered the question of whether the conduct of war was an art or science. Seemingly, this text prompted the complete revision of Book 2 and was incorporated with just minor corrections.

The opening remark observed that the question of whether war was art or science was still a matter for dispute. The fundamental difference between knowing (*Wissen*) and proficiency (*Können*) was also pinpointed. Looking back he said he had stated this before somewhere, which suggests that this text was written later in the process. Proficiency could in the end not be printed in books, which implied that Art should never be in the title of a book: hence perhaps the title *Vom Kriege*. This could be compared with Ernest Gombrich's opening statement on art in his classic *The Story of Art*: 'There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists.'<sup>1180</sup> Art had become synonymous with the required professional knowledge under the name *Theory of Art* or just *Art* in careless language. Separate fields of thought that supported performance could indeed be made scientific, but not the final particular creative and constructive act.

In a word, as little as a human being can be thought of as a pure ability to recognize with no judgement and the other way round, so art and science cannot be completely separated. The more these fine light elements manifest themselves on the outer *Gestalt* of the world [cf. Kant] the more divided becomes their reach; and now once more – where the work of art and creation is the purpose it is in art; while science rules where investigating and knowing are the aim. – After all it is self-evident that it is more appropriate to say *Kriegskunst* rather than *Kriegswissenschaft*... [Clausewitz objected here to the view of war as a craft and finally stated his own view]. We say thus that war belongs not to the realm of art and science, instead to the realm of human intercourse. It is a conflict of great interests that dissolves itself in blood, and only in that is it different from other [conflicts]. Instead of any form of art, it is better to compare war with commerce, which also is a conflict of human interests and activities; while much closer to war is *Politik*, which occasionally can be viewed from the side as a sort of commerce on a larger scale. In addition it [*Politik*] is the womb in which war develops; therein lie the lineaments themselves faintly outlined already like the qualities of the living creation in its germ.<sup>1181</sup>

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<sup>1179</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-28], 'Der Krieg ist ein Instrument der Politik', *Vom Kriege* 8:6b, 990-98

<sup>1180</sup> Cf. E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, Paperback ed. 2006 ), 21

<sup>1181</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], '9tes Kapitel Kriegskunst oder Kriegs- Wissenschaft.', *Schriften* (1990), 668-70, cf. 668-69. 'Mit einem wort, wenn sich ein menschliches Wesen mit bloßem Erkenntnißvermögen ohne Urtheil eben so wenig als umgekehrt denken läßt, so können auch

Clausewitz pointed here to the close relation of science and art in creating proficiency (*hervorbringendes Können*). The art of construction (*Baukunst*) was used as an example, which further underpins the interpretation that the texts on art and architecture belong to this period of thought. The making of science was a form of art as well as thinking in general, but it was a grave mistake to understand the conduct of war as a fully-fledged science with stable laws. War was a product of human conflict. The laws of thought for strategy could be compared to competitive activities such as commerce and *Politik*. The latter provided at this point the lineaments of war for strategic thought, which the *Nachricht* had declared missing, but to be clarified in the process of writing the piece on the war plan.

*Politik* was here to Clausewitz much more than the political interest of governments. It was the 'womb of war'. The roots of conflict foreshadowed the lineaments of war, which were important to grasp to think strategy properly. These would indicate the level of energy and ambition in movement, which the strategist had to consider in determining a proper course of action. The unconditional equation of war with other arts and sciences had brought many false analogies, inducing false ideas and false comparisons. This snowball effect had sent military thought in a wrong direction into a faulty paradigm of fixed ideas. In a way, this had made war apolitical and a dead matter due to the incorrect form of theory. Clausewitz argued:

The most important difference is that war is not an activity of the will that expresses itself on dead material as do the mechanical arts, or against a living, but passionately devoted object such as the human *Geist* and human feeling among the arts of ideals. Instead [war operates] against a living, responsive being. How little does such activity [the conduct of war] suit the intellectual schematism [*Gedankenschematismus*] of art and science: this hits one in the eye, and one immediately understands how the permanent search and quest for laws of thought, that similarly one can develop from the world of dead bodies, must lead to permanent mistakes.<sup>1182</sup>

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Kunst und Wissen nie ganz rein von einander geschieden werden. Je mehr sich diese feinen Licht-Elemente an den Außengestalten der Welt verkörpern, um so getrennter wird ihr Reich; und nun noch einmal – wo Schaffen und Hervorbringen der Zweck ist ist das Gebiet der Kunst, die Wissenschaft herrscht wo Erforschen und Wissen das Ziel ist. – Nach allem dem ergibt sich von selbst, daß es passender sei Kriegskunst als Kriegs Wissenschaft zu sagen... Wir sagen also der Krieg gehört nicht in das Gebiet der Künste und Wissenschaft, sondern in das Gebiet des gesellschaftlichen Lebens. Er ist ein Conflict großer Interessen der sich blutig löst, und nur darin ist er von den anderen verschieden. Besser als mit irgend einer Kunst ließe er sich mit dem Handel vergleichen, der auch ein Conflict menschlicher Interessen und Thätigkeiten ist, und viel näher steht ihm die Politik, die ihrerseits wieder als eine Art Handel im größeren Maaßstab angesehen werden kann. Außerdem ist sie der Schooß in welchem sich der Krieg entwickelt in ihr liegen die Lineamente desselben schon verborgen angedeutet wie die Eigenschaften der lebenden Geschöpfe in ihren Keimen.'

<sup>1182</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Kriegskunst oder Kriegs- Wissenschaft, *Vom Kriege* 2:3; 301-04 cf. 303. 'Das Wesentliche des Unterschiedes besteht darin, daß der Krieg keine Tätigkeit des

The most important difference was to Clausewitz that war was not an activity of will working with dead material as in mechanical art, instead war worked against living people with emotions of right and wrong. It was his intention to investigate in this book whether such a conflict of the living (*Conflict des Lebendigen*) was possible to subsume under laws of thought (*Gesetze*) as guidelines. Clausewitz's view of science and judgement for strategy had become refined indeed. And the hard work with the 'device', the War Plan and the investigation of the *Grundvorstellung* had brought his work to another theoretical level.

Schering, the last person with access to Clausewitz's *Nachlaß*, published in 1941 two pieces Clausewitz had written, on the 'Art and the Theory of Art' and 'The Concept of Physical Beauty'. The first elaborated the relation of art and science, and appears as a direct preparation for the chapter elaborating the art or science of war; this was proficiency and knowing in the sense of strategy. The contents list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* made in 1889 referred to a text entitled 'On the theory of art in general and the difficulties of a theoretical work up of the *Kriegskunst*, eminently of strategy.'<sup>1183</sup> It might be so that Schering just had shortened the title. This obviously strengthens the suggested connection of the pieces on architecture and art with the development of the concept of theory reflecting strategy in this period.

It seems very likely that Clausewitz continued to support his explication of theory in the military sense from analogies with art and architecture. The text 'Character of Private Houses' elaborated the role of purpose and the importance of history for understanding great architecture. To judge a work of architecture one had to understand its purpose and surroundings. This view corresponded to Clausewitz's theoretical understanding of history to grasp war. The text suggested that the world of conceptions was part of human life and as such 'pure images of life'. This means that the idea of a house was a reflection of historical life, so was war. The works of the Great Captains had the same theoretical status. War was a carrier of the historical principle and to be considered as pure historical images of life for the study of strategy.<sup>1184</sup>

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Willens ist, die sich gegen einen toten Stoff äußert wie die mechanischen Künste, oder gegen einen lebendigen, aber doch leidenden, sich hingebenden Gegenstand, wie der menschliche Geist und das menschliche Gefühl bei den idealen Künsten, sondern gegen einen lebendigen, reagierenden. Wie wenig auf eine solche Tätigkeit der Gedankenschematismus der Künste und Wissenschaften paßt, springt in die Augen, und man begreift zugleich, wie das beständige Suchen und Streben nach Gesetzen, denen ähnlich, welche aus der toten Körperwelt entwickelt werden können, zu beständigen Irrtümern hat führen müssen.

<sup>1183</sup> Clausewitz [1823-27], 'Über Kunst und Kunsttheorie'; 'Über den Begriff des körperlich schönen.' only available in Clausewitz, *Geist und Tat*, 153-70. These text might be the same as 'Über Kunsttheorie überhaupt und die Schwierigkeiten einer theoretischen Bearbeitung der *Kriegskunst*, vorzüglich der Strategie' which was on the list of Clausewitz's *Nachlaß* 1889 printed in *Schriften* (1990), 1173-74.

<sup>1184</sup> Clausewitz [1823-27], 'Charachter der Privathäuser', *Schriften* (1979), 151-56, cf. 151. 'Wenn es einen Gedanken gibt, der würdig ist, in der Architektronik zu herrechnen, so gibt es der historische. Wie wenig Teile useres Leben gibt es, die ein Menschengeschlecht überdduern!

The problem of understanding and measuring the relative value of commanders was pondered for example, as we have seen, at the end of Book 6 and the study of the 1815 campaign. The 'Character of Private Houses' had a clear bearing on that problem, which also underlies the suggestion to understand strategy from the viewpoint that war is a continuation of *Politik*. The performance of the Great Captains was framed by their political conditions and was to be regarded as historical images of their particular political conditions.

Clausewitz had earlier clarified that the rule of Louis XIV had made Turenne more of a cog. The king's minor interest in war had been reflected in his captain's passive strategy. Friedrich on the other hand had been an unquestioned political ruler and at the same time military commander. His strategies had displayed a brilliant economy of force, which had made his wars true instruments of his *Politik*. Bonaparte had usurped political power via his military performance, and in the end the continuation of his power had relied on his military performance. As emperor in uniform he could act on as large a scale as he wished without asking permission, contrary to Turenne, for example. To stake everything on one card, as the most foolhardy player of all times, was therefore possible. His political condition allowed strategies of disintegration based on large-scale movement and decisive battle until the enemy was prostrate.

Clausewitz revised the entire Book 2 after the new *Grundvorstellung*, since this posed a task for theory to elaborate. The cover of the old manuscripts to Book 2 expressed an alternative working title: '*2tes Buch über die Theorie der Kriegführung*' - On the Theory of Conducting War.<sup>1185</sup> Two older contents lists were included, which indicates that he pondered different expositions of theory until the final version published in *Vom Kriege* was clarified.

The first chapter defined the *Kriegskunst* as he had done since his youth: 'Thus it is according to our classification tactics is the teachings of the use of fighting forces in combat, strategy is the teachings to use the combats for the purpose of war.'<sup>1186</sup> He motivated the exclusion of war preparations to make fighting the focus of his theory. The background for this choice was summarized in the next chapter, which provided a short history of military thought to pinpoint the ruling state of objectionable military theory. The main difficulties a theory for the conduct of war had to tackle were found in the character of warlike activity as conceptualized into three peculiarities.

1. The elusiveness of human forces and the effect of war on humans was a psychological aspect of fighting completely neglected in older theory. Clausewitz located the origin to the role of 'hostile feeling' (*das feindliche Gefühl*). Hostility

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Für die Welt der Anschauungen, der die Bücher nicht angehören, gibt es nur die Werke der bildenden Künste, und diese sind auch nur als Kustwerke wie Teile unseres Lebens anzusehen, denn insofern sie das Leben darstellen, sind sie bloße Bilder davon. Darum scheint es mir, sollte die Architektonik sich als der Träger des historischen Principien ansehen, die Geschlechter aneinander erinnern, den Nachhall ihres Daseins zu einer festen form kristallisieren.'

<sup>1185</sup> Clausewitz, 'Ueber die Theorie des Krieges', *Schriften* (1990), 648

<sup>1186</sup> Clausewitz [1827-28], 'Einteilung der Kriegskunst', *Vom Kriege* 2:1, 269-78, cf. 271. 'Es ist also nach unserer Einteilung die Taktik die Lehre vom Gebrauch der Streitkräfte im Gefecht, die Strategie die Lehre vom Gebrauch der Gefechte zum Zweck des Krieges.'



differed in form and scope among conflicts; from 'national hate' to minor interest and individual traits in a quest for honour, power and excitement.

This variation had to be considered by the strategist. The effect of danger also had a different scope and influence on people. Danger was of course direct in combat but it had also an extended impact. Clausewitz had here in mind especially politicians and commanders as being responsible to act wisely under the pressure of danger from a possible failure or even disaster. He pointed also to other individual traits and the individuality of the human spirit, which made the effects of warlike activity difficult to predict. A theory of war had to embrace this psychological peculiarity and not clarify things as they existed in a vacuum.

2. Warlike action was a living reaction and the reciprocal action that occurred as a consequence was obviously difficult to calculate. The second peculiarity was to Clausewitz however more about the nature of the reciprocal action that flouted forms of regularity (*Planmäßigkeit*). The impact of reciprocal action was the most individual of all data in action. This peculiarity shattered the possibility of stipulating theoretical instructions, and left much to talent.

3. The profound uncertainty of all proceeding data made the direction of action take place in twilight (*Dämmerlicht*). The consequence was that subjects for decision appeared in a grotesque form, which made it difficult to see things aright, to steer a proper course of action. Clausewitz argued that the talented could more easily handle this situation and trust fortune as a substitute for objective wisdom. These peculiarities in short made positive teaching impossible as a theoretical approach to war: hence the doctrine of the warlike element could not provide positive teaching.<sup>1187</sup>

Tactics, the use of forces in combat, was more substantial, narrower and much easier to frame in more detail than strategy. Clausewitz regarded tactics and strategy as two quite different activities, which implied different ways of thought. The way out for Clausewitz was to make strategic theory purely didactic: '*The theory should be a consideration and not a teaching.*'<sup>1188</sup> This could be seen in relation to tactics, which could encompass a greater element of instructions derived from experience.

Theory for strategy was to be considered as an *analytische Untersuchung*, i.e. an analytical enquiry to foster *Bekanntschaft*, a more precise knowledge of experience to make the history of war intimate knowledge, *Vertrautheit*. The more the former was developed the more knowledge would assume objectivity, which could transmigrate into subjective proficiency in the realm of talent. This theoretical point of view dissolved the present mismatch of theory and practice in Clausewitz's opinion. This view of military theory can be compared to Kant's term '*Propädeutik*', which was the opposite of '*System*'. The Kantian term had the meaning of pre-training or pre-education, as logic was to science.<sup>1189</sup>

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<sup>1187</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Über die Theorie des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 2:2, 279-300, cf. 289. '

<sup>1188</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Über die Theorie des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 2:2, 279-300, cf. 290. '*Die Theorie soll eine Betrachtung und keine Lehre sein.*'

<sup>1189</sup> See clarification in Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 841

The old approach, to study military experience by a comparison of purpose and means, was revised. The condition for immediate transition to peace was pinpointed as a framing purpose for study. A study of strategy should not be pursued too far. Clausewitz was eager to avoid falling into the same trap as Bülow and Jomini. They prided themselves on making their particular enquiry results general theories of conduct. A theory of war need not bother to explain underlying causes of how nature and society worked; instead how present differences influenced conduct. It was therefore possible to conduct war with very simplified knowledge, which solved the recurring problem of explaining the sudden rise of Great Captains.

Clausewitz argued that a commander was not a scholar, as old theory had projected. He stressed that a good tactical commander was not necessarily a good strategist, and vice versa. The making of strategy was an open field and theory at the highest level was limited to didactic enquiries. The learning effort *per se* was the best way to prepare natural talent for high command to think properly. In other types of activity, such as construction engineering, truth could be studied in books, but this was not the case for strategy due to the living reaction and individual conditions.

Strategic knowledge had to be intimate to the individual soul and entirely subjective in the end: 'Well now, this is theory in strategy, and especially where it embraces the highest stipulations, and [strategic theory] must to a much larger extent than tactics stay and be content with pure observation and enquiry of the matter, help the actor to an insight of the matter that can be aggregated into his entire thinking to make his path easier and more secure, but never force him to separate his action from himself in obedience with any objective truth.'<sup>1190</sup> The prelude of revision, the text that pondered war as science and art, was slightly corrected and incorporated in the revised Book 2.<sup>1191</sup> The chapter on method was revised and expanded to better explain the terminology used.<sup>1192</sup> Clausewitz confirmed his sceptical view of *Gesetz* in respect to recognition and regularities.

The concept of *Gesetz* [law of thought - regularity] in respect of recognition is something the conduct of war can do conveniently without, because the composite appearance of war is not so regular and the regularity is not so composite, to reach much further with this concept than with the simple truth. However where the simple *Vorstellung* and talk suffice, the composite raised to a higher degree becomes a power precious and pedantic. But the theory of the conduct of war cannot use the concept of laws in the respect of action, because the inherent change and manifold appearances afford no determination general enough to deserve the name of *Gesetz* [law of thought - regularity].<sup>1193</sup>

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<sup>1190</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Über die Theorie des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 2:2, 279-300, cf. 300. 'Es wird also die Theorie in der Strategie, und besonders da, wo sie die höchsten Bestimmungen umfaßt, noch viel mehr als in der Taktik bei der bloßen Betrachtung und Untersuchung der Dinge stehenbleiben und sich begnügen, dem Handelnden zu jener Einsicht der Dinge zu verhelfen, die, in sein ganzes Denken verschmolzen, seinen Gang leichter und sicherer macht, ihn nie zwingt, von sich selbst zu scheiden, um einer objektiven Wahrheit gehorsam zu sein.'

<sup>1191</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Kriegskunst oder Kriegswissenschaft', *Vom Kriege* 2:3, 301-304

<sup>1192</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Methodismus', *Vom Kriege* 2:4, 305-11

<sup>1193</sup> Clausewitz [1827-29], 'Methodismus', *Vom Kriege* 2:4, 305-11, cf. 306-7. 'Der Begriff des Gesetzes in Beziehung auf das Erkennen kann für die Kriegführung füglich entbehrt werden,

The chapter on critique described the actual way to study experience in three steps. First clarify the actual historical situation, which was not a theoretical activity. Secondly, derive the effects from causes. Finally evaluate the strategic means designed and employed in a learning manner. Clausewitz exemplified the first with a very brief analysis of Bonaparte's action in the 1797 campaign and then in the 1814 campaign, cases he concurrently studied. Clausewitz argued that Napoleon in February 1814 had made the wrong strategic choice by fighting the Austrians under Schwarzenberg first instead of the Prussian Army under Blücher. Had the latter been beaten first the enterprising spirit would have been ruined and the campaign would have turned around. To Clausewitz's way of thinking, Bonaparte had missed the *Schwerpunkt*!<sup>1194</sup>

#### THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Clausewitz most probably sent the essay clarifying/investigating the *Grundvorstellung* to Gröben on 21 November 1829. The tone in the letter to Gröben was more ambivalent regarding his solution to theoretically join war to *Politik* for the thinking of strategy; at least in comparison to his straightforward clarification for Röder almost two years earlier. It is also apparent that Clausewitz never replaced the old *Grundvorstellung* with the new text among his sanitized manuscript.

You, my dear friend wanted to see my operation plan one more time, I send it therefore enclosed to you, as it is preserved. It urges me forward and at the same time keeps me back to share an essay with you in the attachment, in which I have tried to put down the first cornerstone of my war theory. I say, it urges me forward to share it with you because I believe, thereby, many of my observations [and utterances] become more understandable; but again it holds me back because it is against my *Grundsatz* [Most likely - *Der Krieg ist also ein Akt der Gewalt, um den Gegner zur Erfüllung unseres Willens zu zwingen*] to let me view this rough draft as a construction which I have long remained unclear about. When you read this essay and at the same time feel all the difficulties of a theory and the dangers of limiting one, thus to make it false, then you have understood me completely aright. You should not consider the content of ideas given in the margin as pedantry: it serves me only to quickly find myself right again; they are the building blocks [*Bausteine*] marked in red. I count on you not to let anyone read this.<sup>1195</sup>

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weil die zusammengesetzten Erscheinungen des Krieges nicht so regelmäßig, und die regelmäßigen nicht so zusammengesetzt sind, um mit diesem Begriff viel weiter zu reichen als mit der einfachen Wahrheit. Wo aber die einfache Vorstellung und Rede hinreicht, wird die *zusammengesetzte, potenzierte* preziös und pedantisch. Den Begriff des Gesetzes in Beziehung auf das Handeln aber kann die Theorie der Kriegführung nicht gebrauchen, weil es in ihr bei dem Wechsel und der Mannigfaltigkeit der Erscheinungen keine Bestimmung gibt, die allgemein genug wäre, um den Namen eines Gesetzes zu verdienen.'

<sup>1194</sup> Clausewitz [1826-29], 'Kritik', *Vom Kriege* 2:5, 312-24

<sup>1195</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, 21 November 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der Moderne Kriegslehre*, 422-23. 'Sie haben meinen Operationsplan noch einmal einsehen wollen, mein lieber Freund, daher sende ich Ihnen einliegend das, worin er erhalten ist. Zugleich drängt es mich und hält mich wieder zurück, Ihnen in der Anlage einen Aufsatz mitzuteilen, worin ich

The standard interpretations of Rosinski and Kessel projected the undated note to 1830 in conjunction with the epic moment when Clausewitz wrapped his package before going to Breslau. This has actually given a sort of false value to the first chapter of Book 1. As mentioned earlier, the undated note was written before the *Nachricht* in July 1827. Gat's reinterpretation suggested early 1827. The present work has even suggested 1826. The only text Clausewitz was satisfied with prior to solving the attack-and-defence puzzle was the first *Grundvorstellung* clarifying war by theorizing the warlike element.<sup>1196</sup>

Note that Clausewitz addressed the piece as an essay. Marie stated in the Preface to volume one of *Vom Kriege* in late June 1832 that her brother had edited Clausewitz's manuscript by replacing an older text with a newer that reflected the revision he had had in mind when he wrote the *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827: 'He [F.W.von Brühl] had during his careful reading and editing [of the manuscript] found the commenced revision, which my beloved husband had written *in the year of 1827* and used for the time being as an intentional work according to the following *Nachricht*, and inserted it in the first Book for which it was intended (any further did it not extend).'<sup>1197</sup>

Marie's statement supports the interpretation that the undated note was written prior to the *Nachricht* and the completion of Book 6. The essay 'What is War?' was undoubtedly inserted by Marie's brother in Book 1 in the first part of 1832, replacing the first *Grundvorstellung*. It was not done by Clausewitz himself, which might reflect his ambivalence. The work passed on into his two most extensive campaign studies in 1828.<sup>1198</sup> Seemingly, this was to solve the problems associated with his ambivalence about *Grundvorstellung* and to improve the theoretical coherence: he had felt it piecemeal, as indicated to Gröben.

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versucht habe, den ersten Grundstein zum Bau meiner Kriegs-Theorie zu legen. Ich sage, es drängt mich, es Ihnen mitzuteilen, weil ich glaube, dadurch in vielen meinen Äußerungen verständlicher zu werden, es hält mich aber auch wieder zurück, weil es gegen meinen Grundsatz ist, dieses rohen Werkstücke eines Baus sehen zu lassen, mit dem ich bei mir selbst lange noch nicht im Reinen bin. Wenn Sie beim Lesen dieses Aufsatzes alle Schwierigkeiten einer Theorie und alle Gefahren einer zu beschränkten, also falschen, zu gleicher Zeit fühlen, so haben Sie mich ganz verstanden. Den an der Seite angegebenen Gedanken Inhalt wollen Sie nicht für eine Pedanterie halten: er dient mir nur, mich schnell wieder zu finden; es sind die mit rothem Mörtel bezeichneten Nummern der Bau-Steine. Ich rechne darauf, daß Sie dies niemand sehen lassen.'

<sup>1196</sup> Clausewitz [November 1816-18], '1tes Kapitel. Zweck des Krieges' in *Schriften* (1990), 630-36.

<sup>1197</sup> Marie v. Clausewitz, 'Vorrede 30 June 1832', *Vom Kriege*, 173-78, cf. 177. 'Er hat unter anderem bei dem sorgfältigen Durchlesen und Ordnen desselben die angefangene Umarbeitung gefunden, welche mein geliebter Mann *in der im Jahre 1827* geschriebenen und weiter unten folgenden *Nachricht* als eine beabsichtigte Arbeit erwähnt, und hat sie an den Stellen des ersten Buches, für welche sie bestimmt war (denn weiter reichte sie nicht), eingeschaltet.'

<sup>1198</sup> Clausewitz [1825-26 +1828 not later than October], 'Feldzug von 1796 in Italien', *Werke* Vol 4/10 (1833); Clausewitz [October 1828-April 1830], 'Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und der Schweiz', *Werke* Vol 5-6/10

The first study to clear his mind was Bonaparte's breakthrough as a first-rate commander in the campaign of 1796 in Italy, which was a continuation of an earlier work as already mentioned. Gneisenau read this manuscript in the second part of October 1828.<sup>1199</sup> This campaign and especially the Battle of Castiglione in August 1796 had been the root of Jomini's system of strategy.<sup>1200</sup> Clausewitz told Gröben a couple of months later that his historical campaign studies were intended to help him to find the inner truth of experience that could educate the mind.<sup>1201</sup>

The analysis of the 1796 campaign was seemingly not enough for Clausewitz to solve the problem he perceived. He continued instead with his most extensive study of strategy ever by digging deep in the 1799 campaign in Italy and Switzerland.<sup>1202</sup> This final study was brought to an abrupt end in April 1830 by other duties.<sup>1203</sup> The manuscript was sent to Gröben in April 1830, with a special map that included Gothard. Clausewitz had not had time to proofread and the final consideration was made under great pressure from his new appointment.<sup>1204</sup> The final words were probably the very last he wrote about strategy in a theoretical sense. These explicated his lifelong concern about the problem of warlike energy and arbitrary military models.

We will not speak of national characteristics, because the Austrian army was composed of very different kinds of tribe, but it is clear that even soldiers with tempers rather than the power of reason were employed, which must have had the largest influence on the escalation towards enthusiasm and fanaticism of mood and will that was characteristic of the French army at that time, as this often came to an independent expression (cf. broken loose from reason and bonds). From the other side there is nothing to tell, as the Erzherzog indicated; that because the dead mechanism in service and fighting regulations was wedged by malicious geometry and could not keep equilibrium using certain clever principles, this must necessarily paralyse and kill off the inner man.<sup>1205</sup>

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<sup>1199</sup> Gneisenau to Clausewitz, Erdmannsdorf 21 October 1828, Pertz & Delbrück, *Gneisenau*, Vol 5/5, 555-56

<sup>1200</sup> Langendorf, *Krieg führen: Antoine-Henri Jomini*, 333-35. See Jomini, *Kritische und Militairische Geschichte*, Vol 2/4 (1811), 338-39

<sup>1201</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 2 January 1829, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.421 'Das führt mich stets in eine Menge von Analysen und Prüfungen, die durchaus nur Interesse gewähren können, wenn man die Entfaltung der inneren Wahrheit sucht und nicht den Total-Eindruck der äußern Erscheinungen.'

<sup>1202</sup> Clausewitz [October 1828-April 1830], 'Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und der Schweiz', *Werke* Vol 5-6/10, cf. IX

<sup>1203</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 17 April 1830, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.423

<sup>1204</sup> Clausewitz to Gröben, Berlin 17 April 1830, cited in Kessel, *Zur Genesis der modernen Kriegslehre*, 405-23, cf.423

<sup>1205</sup> Clausewitz [October 1828-April 1830], 'Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und der Schweiz', *Werke* Vol 6/10, cf. 397. 'Von der Nationaleigenthümlichkeit wollen wir nicht sprechen, da die österreichische Armee aus Völkerstämmen so verschiedener Art zusammengesetzt war, aber es ist klar daß gerade bei dem gemeinen Soldaten bei welchem mehr die Gemüths als die Verstandesstärke in Anspruch genommen werden, die bis zum

The extent of Clausewitz's revision after the *Nachricht* has been regarded in the literature as uncertain.<sup>1206</sup> Marie stated in the 1832 preface that Clausewitz had expressed the intention of finalising *Vom Kriege* in the winter of 1831-1832. But his death on 16 November 1831 ruined that plan. Those who have believed that the first chapter of *Vom Kriege*, the revised *Grundvorstellung*, was the only text Clausewitz was happy with have obviously been wrong. Gat suggested that Clausewitz had revised his work in small portions between 1827 and 1830: 'He merely rewrote, amended and added sections (some of which were quite extensive) to be incorporated into the existing text.'<sup>1207</sup> Gat lacks precision. The essay enquiring into war and the *Grundvorstellung* led to adjustments, which certainly reflected the problems he had faced. Clausewitz clarified a new ontology and revised the scope of theory. But he did not return to correct his entire manuscript as his intention was in the *Nachricht*. The final chapter discuss the state of completion further.

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Chapter 13 has analysed the final phase of the creative process that distilled *Vom Kriege*. This included the essay that investigated the *Grundvorstellung*, later celebrated as 'Clausewitz's testament'. It was explained that the element of *Politik* saved the relevance of the warlike element and dissolved the double way of war. Note that the element of *Politik* implied both animation and restriction of the warlike element. Clausewitz's revision of the concept of theory was explained to point out his didactic scope of theory for strategy. The chapter noted his subtle ambivalence regarding the essay investigating the *Grundvorstellung*, but also that the revised conception of theory brought coherence. The final chapter will further elaborate Clausewitz's result and the question of completeness to make a fusion of horizons.

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Enthusiasmus und Fanatismus gehende Steigerung der Stimmung und des Willens welche den französischen Armeen damals eigen war, der größten Einfluß haben mußte, so oft dieser Wille zu einer selbständigen äußerung kam. Von der anderen Seite ist auch das nicht zu verkennen worauf der Erzherzog in der obigen Stelle hindeutet, daß wenn dem toten Mechanismus einer in lauter Geometrie eingezwängten Dienst- und Fechtordnung nicht durch gewisse geistige Principe das Gleichgewicht gehalten wird, er nothwendig den inneren Menschen lähmen und abtöden muß.'

<sup>1206</sup> See for example Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 381 n.61

<sup>1207</sup> Gat, Clausewitz's final notes, 49



## 14. FINAL THOUGHTS

### FUSION OF HORIZONS

The fact is; there isn't any way that the terrorist enemies can win a single battle against us. The real *centre of gravity* of this war is not out on the battlefield, it's back here in Washington, D.C. because it's a test of wills. As have previous conflicts been tests of wills. It's going to take steadfastness and perseverance and a confidence that the goal is the right goal and that the work that those wonderful young men and women are doing out there is noble work. I don't have a doubt in my mind but that we're going to prevail.<sup>1208</sup>

*Interview with US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld  
2006*

This work has analysed the perennial problem of thinking strategy properly through the ideas and experience of Clausewitz. The aim has been to reconstruct the Prussian's train of thought by reviewing the German sources. It has served the purpose of revisiting the classic concept of strategy, simply military thinking performed in the conceptual interspace between *Politik* and tactics; to merge opposites for action, ideas half political and half military in nature. Donald Rumsfeld's comment above reflects that Clausewitz's ideas are not just of academic interest, but still a framer of ideas on which to act. However, his ideas have often taken new shapes in the process of reception, in academic works as well as ideas for action. The current use of centre of gravity and Rumsfeld's comment illustrate this type of conceptual transformation quite clearly.

Rumsfeld's undertone of Vietnam, seeing the 'War on Terror' as a new 'test of wills', which this time, too, was situated chiefly in Washington D.C., illustrates the historicity of military and political understanding. In addition, it illuminates a crucial aspect of the problem of thinking strategy properly; formative experience often becomes a guide for future problems despite their substantial differences. Scharnhorst, we recall, warned about this inclination in 1804 in one of his notes on proper military *Bildung*. Clausewitz

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<sup>1208</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) transcript of Radio Interview with Secretary Rumsfeld on the 830 AM WCCO Radio Talk Show March 28 2006, [Online version]; URL <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1218> accessed 5 October 2011 (my emphasize)



also struggled with this and his train of thought helps us to consider it from several perspectives. The Introduction proposed six questions as motor for the present work:

1. Was there a fundamental turning point in Clausewitz's ideas in 1827?
2. Was 'the two ways of war' new to Clausewitz in 1827?
3. What did Clausewitz's mean by *Politik*?
4. How should we understand the '*wunderliche Drefaltigkeit*'?
5. How should we in broad terms comprehend Clausewitz and his work?
6. What was Clausewitz's result?

The purpose of the final chapter is to briefly recapture and discuss the present work, answer the questions, along with some short observations on military thinking, 'New Wars' and different readings of *Vom Kriege*. I also propose some implications on military education. The 'fickle trinity' is used as structure because it brings forward the four major components of Clausewitz's way of thinking. The chapter addresses; first, theoretical perspective: study Clausewitz through history as effect; secondly, Trinity and theory – Clausewitz's ideas in a nutshell. This part follows Clausewitz's concept of theory, the warlike element, the element of *Politik* and the element of chance. The work ends with a remark on Clausewitz's ambition to create clarity and realism; in addition the question of completeness is addressed. I use the format of paragraphs to make the result and points of the present work as clear as possible.

#### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE, STUDY CLAUSEWITZ THROUGH HISTORY AS EFFECT

The underpinning theoretical idea has been that a good starting point to understand Clausewitz's legacy is to grasp as far as possible his points according to his historical conditions. Historical thinking enhances understanding of the continuum in which fundamental military ideas have evolved and their ultimate relevance according to later and different conditions. Successive generations of readers have clearly influenced the way we understand Clausewitz and strategy in general.

*Vom Kriege* was a fruit, but also just a minor part, of his entire effort. Clausewitz's theoretical arguments were clearly inspired by his experience; in a way 'less philosophical' than many accounts project. Consequently, this work has suggested a seamless train of thought in evolving situations, a chronological reading of his many texts in a glimpse of context. This way of reading displays an interesting intellectual dynamic about fundamental problems for strategic command and strategic thinking with multiple roots – moral, political and military.

#### §1. *Wirkungsgeschichte*

The principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte* was in chapter two selected as ontology to theoretically embrace both the evolving reading of *Vom Kriege* and Clausewitz's evolving train of thought. This principle implies that understanding of social affairs is historical. Consequently, theoretically every interpretation takes place in a particular situation, within history, thus according to a particular fore-structure of understanding and horizon of expectation.

The present work emphasises the fore-structure of understanding and horizon of expectation as paramount to the interpretations and statements we make about the living world; a standpoint fruitful for the study of military thought in general and by implication for military education to foster multisided thinking outside doctrine. Military matters are not clear-cut, not militarily objective, for a variety of reasons such as dependence on moral and political outlook, rival interests, different expectations, ideology, formative experience and tradition. At a glance, basic military language appears as a remarkably stable continuum, but meaning differs clearly in different contexts.

### *§2. Spaces of experience and horizons of expectations*

Looking back, history can at macro level be categorized in spaces of experience. Particular historical events, ground-breaking ones, induce phases of transition and open a new space of experience, which influences our values and understanding – how we make sense and interpret. The period of wars 1792-1815 emanating from the French Revolution was such a time for Clausewitz.

Within this period of change and uncertainty his interpretations and arguments were fostered by the threat of an aggressive France and the perceived mismatch between visions and realities, militarily as well as politically in Prussia. After Waterloo, theoretically in a new space of experience, he was able to reflect, theorize and contextualize these events. This took place in a situation more stable and secure with access to the unfolding of events he theorized, which of course matters.

Chapter 2 explained different readings of Clausewitz. Note that Clausewitz has often been consulted after defeat and revisited or refuted in the opening of new spaces of experience. For example, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union opened a new space of experience posing new challenges for strategic thought, troubles discussed in e.g. the discourse of 'New War'.

### *§3. Politics of truth - historical images of Clausewitz - four archetypes*

According to reception theory we should understand Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* and his readers as a productive triangle that brings the meaning of the text 'alive'. In theory, the reader understands more than the author. But, historically, every generation has borrowed and read Clausewitz's arguments selectively to fit their preferences and problems. The present work propose four archetypes of Clausewitz visible in the in the historical record.

1. *'The unpractical and sceptical Prussian'* – an image rooted in Jomini's pejorative view of Clausewitz. The Prussian was too sceptical in refuting the prospect of a military science. In addition he was difficult to follow and did not write in a user-friendly format. Thus, he did not clarify strategy like a guidebook.
2. *'Der Kriegsphilosoph'* - the philosopher of the doctrine of the warlike element nurtured in Wilhelmine Germany. The break-through-image of Clausewitz was adored and literally read by generations of military elites, not only in Germany.
3. *'The modern Clausewitz'* – created, for good reasons, out of the ashes of two world wars and as a reaction to the *'Der Kriegsphilosoph'* – the codifier of the doctrine of the

warlike element. Clausewitz was interpreted, more or less, as theorizing war as a formal act of state policy. The underlying idea was that war must be governed by political reason, hence the emphasis on political primacy over military conduct of war. This was codified as 'Clausewitz's *dictum*', as the new key to his ideas in front of the doctrine of warlike element. The image is ratified and dominated by the Howard & Paret translation of *On War* (1976), and by the way-pointing interpretations of Aron and Paret.

4. '*The outdated Clausewitz*' – has been a frequent image, especially in the beginnings of a new space of experience. He has been refuted for a variety of reasons over the years. Note that the origins of refutation can mostly be traced to particular dominating keys and interpretations of established images. For example, the New War discourse refuted his ideas by targeting aspects of policy and the state, two cherished themes in the Cold War image of his legacy, intimate to the 'modern Clausewitz'. But refutations have also provoked efforts to reinterpret Clausewitz and defend his legacy.

#### *§4. History and progress*

A major reason for refutations of Clausewitz concerns the view of progress in relation to war and the art of war; in addition, the value one attributes to history to understand war professionally. 'Experts' in the scientific and military forefront state now and then that 'it is time to retire Clausewitz'. Our time endorses technological sophistication and instant information, which some see as the primary yardstick for military performance. 'Long-dead Carl' is therefore pure history and outdated. Some, believing in 'harder forms of science' argue accordingly that history has no value for modern military education. Seemingly, every generation tends to regard their age as more complex than earlier, but also scientifically better equipped to master war.

Ironically, these standpoints resemble the view of military engineering and belief in progress that Clausewitz theoretically combated, to explain a proper form of thinking strategy. His very uncontroversial conclusion was that everyone has to think for themselves according to ruling conditions; by implication every age has its 'theory of war', thus its philosophy of strategy.

Military education has used history for a long time. To think historically about military matters fosters a broader and more versatile military understanding, which can help to question presuppositions of ruling doctrine.<sup>1209</sup> History can help to cultivate judgment and reason. History cannot, however, solve our practical problems. Simply put, historical thinking can recollect 'futures past' in Koselleck's apt words; professionally that matters indeed. It helps to understand how we think and perceive our problems. If we recall Gadamer, later understanding of the social world is not better *per se* but different, at least in principle.

Clausewitz was in his situation and we are in ours. It can sometime be hard to understand Clausewitz as a German before the First and Second World Wars, due to the immense influence this period has on the perception of the German. His alien

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<sup>1209</sup> See for example *The Past as Prologue – The Importance of History to The Military Profession*, Edited by Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

moral-political-military views can be criticized in many ways in relation to modern conditions and how we think today. The present work has not tried to sanitize his views and make him contemporary to our moral standard, simply because we should not read Clausewitz as guidebook. On the contrary, we should learn from the tension of competing views and explanations. The tension between his situation and ours can help us to think about our beliefs.

In the end, military thinking presupposes a moral and political attitude, not least clearly displayed in Clausewitz's ideas. What is right and acceptable needs continual contemplation in democratic military education. The present work follows Clausewitz and argues we should understand strategy as an intellectual activity performed in the conceptual interspace between the tactical and the political. It does not render strategy immune to progress, but fairly stable in the main scope and basic problems. Contemporary conditions still merit Clausewitz's didactic conception of theory, that strategy should be learned through historical case studies rather than doctrine.

#### *§5. Clausewitz as scapegoat*

Clausewitz, who tried to be smart against his intellectual antagonists, has more than once been blamed for his reader's deeds. Liddell Hart's criticism in the 1920-1930s comes first to mind. Clausewitz was already in the 1870s labelled the '*Der Kriegsphilosoph*', which some people tend to superficially equate with the image of later German militarism and aggression. The labelling leads astray from his purpose to theorize realism in strategic thought, propounding defence as the strongest form of war and theoretical conclusion to refute a positive doctrine.

A recent example of the scapegoat theory is Tony Corn's criticism of the contemporary 'obsession' with Clausewitz in US military thought and education. His article '*Clausewitz in Wonderland*', 2006, criticized American military thought and performance, simultaneously refuting both strategy and Clausewitz:

"Amateurs talk about strategy, professionals talk about logistics." In the five years since the 9/11 events, the old military adage has undergone a "transformation" of its own: Amateurs, to be sure, continue to talk about strategy, but real professionals increasingly talk about — anthropology. In Iraq as in Afghanistan, real professionals have learned the hard way that — to put it in a nutshell — the injunction "Know Thy Enemy, Know Thyself" matters more than the bookish "Know Thy Clausewitz" taught in war colleges. Know thy enemy: At the tactical and operational levels at least, it is anthropology, not Clausewitzology, that will shed light on the grammar and logic of tribal warfare and provide the conceptual weapons necessary to return fire. Know thyself: It is only through anthropological "distanciation" that the U.S. military (and its various "tribes": Army, Navy, etc.) will become aware of its own cultural quirks — including a monomaniacal obsession with Clausewitz — and adapt its military culture to the new enemy.<sup>1210</sup>

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<sup>1210</sup> Tony Corn, '*Clausewitz in Wonderland*', *Policy Review* Web special (1 September 2006), [Online version]; URL <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/6795> accessed 8 February 2013

Corn, eager to make a point, followed and exploited the stereotype of Clausewitz as if he had written the complete Prussian manual of success now obsolete. The text was of course about much more and serious matters than *On War* in August 2006. But it reflected the shortcomings of reading Clausewitz as if he had codified *the* principles of war, a Prussian Jomini. The present work argues that this way of reading distorts Clausewitz's more lasting and valuable points.<sup>1211</sup>

#### *§7. Prussia first*

The present work suggests we should read Clausewitz as having Prussia foremost in mind when he elucidated his ideas. This implies that particular conditions form the undertones of his arguments. Clausewitz has been criticized for neglecting important aspects of a 'general theory of war', for example sea power. But Prussia was never a sea power; read with strategy and continental conditions in mind, his way of thinking can anyway be understood on a level of abstraction above tactical and technical details.

The present work has returned to the sources and tried to illuminate the 'German way of thinking' in the aftermath of Kant to grasp Clausewitz. His way of thinking strategy in the culture and context of '*Dichter und Denker*' is not always easy to follow. Clausewitz's work is complicated, because of language, structure of analysis and patchy creation. In addition, the interaction of later generations' divergent interpretations has made the work even more complicated to understand. With hindsight, his work has a rather straightforward structure.

Clausewitz's analysis of strategic thought resembled Romantic hermeneutics and reflected ideals typical of Romantic thought in general, for example: the individuality of human expression, the preference of feelings rather than cold rationalization in closed abstract systems, distilling and thinking via opposites, dialectics to create an intellectual dynamic in the analysis. His affiliation to Kant and Hegel has been discussed in other works, sometimes making his ideas unnecessarily remote and difficult to comprehend. The present work follows the theoretical view that theory and intellectual history should be studied in context.

#### *§8. Clausewitz's theoretical eminence*

The present work has tried to retrace Clausewitz's train of thought, in context, to enhance understanding of *Vom Kriege* and strategy from its modern roots. Clausewitz perceived a fundamental problem; disconnected visions and realities, morally-

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<sup>1211</sup> See also Bruce Fleming. 'Can Reading Clausewitz Save Us from Future Mistakes?', *Parameters* (Spring 2004), 62-76. See reply by Henry Craig, 'Confusion? Or Willful Misreading?', *Parameters* (Summer 2004); Tony Corn, 'Clausewitz in Wonderland,' *Policy Review*, Web-special (September 2006); Phillip S. Meilinger, 'Busting the Icon: Restoring Balance to the Influence of Clausewitz,' *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Fall 2007), 116-45. See reply by Nik Gardner, 'Resurrecting the 'Icon': The Enduring Relevance of Clausewitz's *On War*,' *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Spring 2009), 119-33; Stephen L. Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed Up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (A Way Forward)*, (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009)

politically-militarily. He tried to tackle this problem theoretically. Obviously, this problem *per se* is perennial with multiple dimensions. On one hand visions can be naïve, as Clausewitz perceived Prussian thinking in relation to Napoleonic realities. On the other it is apparent that too 'realistic visions' can trigger conflict and be counter-productive morally-politically-militarily. Clausewitz and the later use of his ideas tell us a lot about this perennial dilemma.

Clausewitz's train of thought and simple structure of basic ideas helps us to consider this problem in other contexts from several perspectives. Despite the time difference Clausewitz clarifies, perhaps better than any other, how to understand strategy theoretically and the principal difficulties involved. But he does not offer strategy itself, which is important to realize for profitable reading. He most clearly explained this to us by conceptualising war as a particular continuation of *Politik*, causing changeable enmity, i.e. a warlike element in flux, and different room for the element of chance.

#### TRINITY AND THEORY – CLAUSEWITZ'S IDEAS IN A NUTSHELL

Some following the 'modern Clausewitz' have misleadingly and unilaterally projected chapter one of *Vom Kriege* as 'Clausewitz's testament', as the start of a new and unfinished perspective. The present work refutes this interpretation and suggests several reinterpretations, both in terms of factual meaning and overall weight. Clausewitz investigated in this essay a revised *Grundvorstellung* of war for the rest of the work, simply to set a proper theoretical tone, to clarify the scope of proper strategic thought in conjunction with a realistic view of theory. Apparently, he was ambivalent regarding the result as explained in chapter 13.

Clausewitz's conclusion was that war, hence the warlike element given its close relation to the element of *Politik* and the element of chance hence individual conditions, should to be thought of as a '*wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*'. This *Vorstellung* depicted the challenge to theorize the dynamics involved for proper strategic thought. War was not a thing suitable to investigate in splendid isolation; therefore the warlike element was not suitable to employ as the sole conceptual core. War was better thought of as a composite concept, fickle in appearance, as the shaping was dominated by the reciprocity of three variable tendencies given from context. This condition caused the inner truth of war to change slightly in every case, which a theory had to tackle to truthfully support the power of judgement and practical reason; thus, to clarify the proper form of strategic thought.

The present work argues that we should read this renowned device as a 'fickle trinity' rather than as 'amazing' or 'paradoxical' and so on. This interpretation seems to reflect better Clausewitz's theoretical point. The text outlined, very well indeed, a summary of the many difficulties involved in theorizing war for strategic thought. It was, more or less, a compression of his train of thought, a concise conclusion and slight adjustment to dissolve theoretical inconsistency.

With hindsight, war clarified as a 'fickle trinity', producing three '*Anziehungspunkten*', points of intellectual attraction, still depicts the problem of thinking and theorising strategy quite well. Clausewitz pinpointed in each element a major tendency, described as they generate many very different laws of thought (*viele verschiedene*

*Gesetzgebungen*) of fluctuating magnitudes. The 'fickle trinity' depicted the challenge to theorize the conduct of war posed by these three dominating tendencies:<sup>1212</sup>

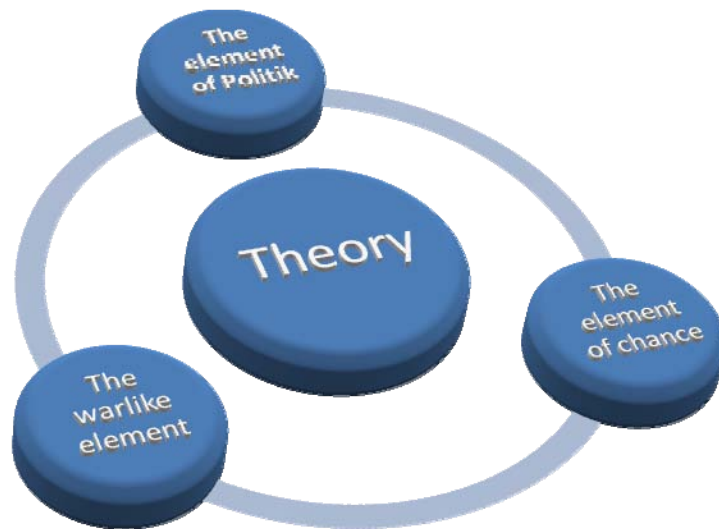


FIGURE 5 THE CHALLENGE TO THEORIZE THE PRINCIPLE ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN THINKING STRATEGY PROPERLY.

- a. The tendency of '*ursprüngliche Gewaltsamkeit*' of the warlike element, encapsulated the effect of vehemence in hate and hostility, hence the varying scope of warlike energy. It was to consider as a '*blinder Naturtrieb*', a blind instinct or unpredictable impulse in thinking strategy. Clausewitz referred this tendency as 'more turned towards the people'.
- b. The tendency of '*Spiel der Wahrscheinlichkeiten und des Zufalls*' of the element of chance encapsulated the understanding of war as gamble. War was to be considered as a '*freie Seelentätigkeit*', a free activity of talent in thinking strategy. Clausewitz referred this tendency more towards the commander and his army.
- c. The tendency of '*der untergeordnete Natur*', i.e. a subordinated nature emanated from the element of *Politik*. War was a '*politisches Werkzeug*', a political tool or instrument. The present work suggests we should observe the subtle irony of the German text '*dem bloßen Verstande anheimfällt*'. This tendency made war a victim to 'pure reason' of different kinds, hence it fell prey to the rulers and leaders that used war as tool to satisfy purpose and desire. Clausewitz referred to this tendency as 'more towards the government.' Note that the making of policy was a matter for the government alone.

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<sup>1212</sup> Clausewitz [Autumn 1827-November 1829], 'Was ist der Krieg', *Vom Kriege* 1:1, 191-213, cf. 212-13.

A theory to guide proper strategic thought must not predetermine any values and predominance of any of the three if it is to reflect reality. Instead, a proper theory must stay '*schwebend*', i.e. hovering in between these points of intellectual attraction, compare figure 5. It is however striking how successive generations of readers have singled out one of the '*Anziehungspunkten*' to project primacy in decoding strategy and Clausewitz's ideas. In conclusion, 'points of intellectual attraction' and 'fickle trinity' were a very apt clarification of the problem of thinking strategy properly.

#### §9. van Creveld's criticism of Clausewitz

Martin van Creveld's interpretation and criticism of Clausewitz is interesting, as well as illuminating regarding the shortcomings of reading *On War* in terms of a modern normative theory of war. In a follow-up text to *The Transformation of War* (1991) van Creveld asked '*What is wrong with Clausewitz?*' (1997). Five concise aspects of fading relevance were identified:<sup>1213</sup>

First, *state versus state*: van Creveld argued that Clausewitz's framework was developed with the presumption of the state as the sole warring actor, neglecting other types of political organisation. He interpreted the trinity in terms of 'Trinitarian Warfare', as Clausewitz simply regarded war as the bond between people, army and government. The problem was that Clausewitz had projected war as men in uniform fighting for their country, clearly separated from non-combatants. Mary Kaldor argued later in a similar way. Mostly, in modern war at least one side was a non-state actor.

Secondly, *the law of war*: Clausewitz had failed to take this aspect seriously, one of the most misleading and dangerous aspects of his theory. He was claimed to have argued that war in general was always about 'the maximum use of force'. In addition, media and the CNN-effect have made the law of war even more crucial nowadays.

Thirdly, *the offence-defence relationship*: it was argued that Clausewitz's traditional military language had no relevance for 'non-Trinitarian wars', that he had favoured short and decisive campaigns. His selection of cases was mostly only modern, 1740-1815, and therefore too narrow for a 'universal theory'. It was argued that time will only work against the attacker if it is limited. It was possible to imagine prolonged wars that did not naturally tend towards the extreme. Basically, van Creveld regarded most present military concepts, such as; concentration, the correlation of forces in time and space, as irrelevant for 'Non-Trinitarian Wars'.

Fourthly, *policy by other means*: van Creveld followed the English translation by viewing *Politik* solely as policy. He argued that it was easy to falsify this view. War could also be a continuation of religion and justice. These aspects could of course often be a disguise for 'practical political concerns', such as personal gain. He also criticized Clausewitz's lifelong device of ends and means, by suggesting that wars of survival did not fit this instrumental model as the two become one and the same in war of survival.

Fifthly, *factors for fighting*: Clausewitz was criticized for his utterly rational approach to war, not asking what factors drive people to fight. People may risk their life for other reasons than overarching policy.

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<sup>1213</sup> van Creveld, What is wrong with Clausewitz?, 9-23



Unfortunately, van Creveld's interpretation confuses more than clarifies the lasting value and explanatory potential of Clausewitz's work. He argues on a level of abstraction well below that of Clausewitz's theoretical points, as *On War* was an academic textbook about the phenomenon of war in general. However, van Creveld's interpretation is suitable for reflections and corrections, to bolster a more theoretical reading of Clausewitz, profitable to the student of strategy.

§10. *The 'modern Clausewitz' needs to be reconsidered*

The New War scholars, van Creveld, Keegan and Kaldor, criticized Clausewitz's 'theory of war'. By and large, their objections nest in the image of the 'modern Clausewitz'. The introduction pointed out that the New War critique evoked a wave of new interpretations to defend and explain Clausewitz. This conflict of interpretation has influenced the present work.

Paret, followed by others, suggested; 'The purpose of Clausewitz's theoretical writings was to develop not a new doctrine but a truer understanding of the phenomenon of war...*On War* is an attempt to penetrate to the essence of its subject.'<sup>1214</sup> Paret, clearly influenced by Hahlweg, suggested a comparison to Husserlian phenomenology with a quest for *Wesensschau*. This has been the dominating way to interpret the 'modern Clausewitz'. However, this view needs to be modified.

Consequently, it is also misleading to generally interpret Clausewitz as seeking an eternal explanation of war as a phenomenon in every detail, hence the true nature of interstate war. Sometimes he used ambitious words and constructions. These often, however, conformed to the way of arguing at the time, and should be regarded as weapons against his intellectual antagonists. Skinner has theoretically refuted the quest for 'right, eternal and morally proper concepts' quite well. No one stands above the 'intellectual battle'; words are assets and weapons in the discourse of a particular time. This reflects Clausewitz as well.

Granted, the state played a big role then, and continues to do so. Granted also that Clausewitz observed politically and militarily the bond between people, army and government as important for Prussia. But as demonstrated the 'fickle trinity' was not about that bond *per se*. The state was really not the *theoretical* hinge, as faintly implied by Paret's interpretation and others emphasizing policy and political primacy as keys to the 'modern Clausewitz'. In thinking strategy, the map of personalised agents was always in flux and a matter to be investigated in the particular case.

It is apparent that van Creveld misunderstood Clausewitz, his motives and theoretical way of arguing in making him contemporary with our own moral standard. The analytical consequence of the 'modern Clausewitz' is actually quite well encapsulated in van Creveld's suggestion of 'Trinitarian War vs. Non-Trinitarian War'. Basically, that Clausewitz's result is a model of interstate war, that he simply codified war as the bond between people, army and government on the road to decisive battle. This interpretation of *Vom Kriege* and the 'fickle trinity' is really not sufficient; consequently, Clausewitz is refuted on faulty grounds.

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<sup>1214</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 356-58, cf. 356

The present work suggests we should not read Clausewitz's work as a 'general theory of war' with the undertone of codifying of war as a sole act of policy, just as interstate war moderated by political reason. This framing may be normatively attractive, but leads astray from Clausewitz's points and diminishes the power of explanation.

*§11. Clausewitz, a theoretical innovative pragmatist with practical motives*

Clausewitz was not a trained philosopher and did not trade the military world for a scholarly one. He had primarily not the intention to explain war as phenomena in general scientific terms. He was a political realist and military pragmatist; a *Generalmajor* in the Prussian Army, theoretically interested and innovative however. He had the gift, or peculiarity, to easily think in pregnant abstractions. He was ambitious and most likely desired promotion to *Generalleutnant*. Marie told us that Clausewitz made his work, more or less, a private venture, since he wanted to use his faculties and be of use for the common good of Prussia.

Up to a certain point of time he did not believe in a consistent and stringent theory to explain and support the making of strategy. Chapter 9 explained that the Small Volume, commenced in Koblenz to elucidate the *Hauptsachen*, main matters, of modern strategy, transmigrated into the larger more ambitious frame of *Vom Kriege*, apparently sometime around 1823-1824. He had clearly the ambition to disprove the old school of *Kriegskunst*, which he regarded as deeply untrue.

Chapter 7 explained that Clausewitz had foremost practical motives to write a piece on strategy. The strategic direction in Prussia had suffered from fundamental conflicts and rival interests between the king, the government, civil servants and soldiers, causing immense friction. Gneisenau pointed out this friction as his worst experience during the wars, worse than facing Bonaparte in combat.

The present work suggests we should read *Vom Kriege* as Clausewitz trying to explain a proper form in which to think strategy. Chapter three discussed military *Bildung* to cultivate practical judgment, which underlies Clausewitz's ideas. Scharnhorst nurtured an oral approach to strategy, that strategic thought should be discussed and learnt via historical examples rather than with prescribed and generic models. Clausewitz, 'Scharnhorst's Apostle', succeeded in theoretical terms in developing this approach further.

He surpassed his pragmatic teacher, sharing the same outlook. Their epistemological standpoint was rooted in viewing the ontology of combat, campaign and war as open-ended activities due to the elusive confluence of moral and physical forces. That premise made every war a composite with a 'peculiar *Gestalt*' in development, an individual product in context. This condition has evidently not changed since their day. Note that Clausewitz reinforced this basic standpoint by further clarifying the element of *Politik* in the conduct of war.

*§12. The first viewpoint: Vom Kriege is a philosophy of strategy  
to explain a proper way of thinking strategy*

Clausewitz clearly sought to explain a proper way, a form, of strategic thought. This quote from *Strategische Kritik des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich*, written in the

nexus of books 6, 7 and 8, summarises his theoretical scope quite clearly. It can be compared to the opening quote in chapter three in which the young *Leutnant* spoke about the same topic – the form of strategic thought.

Every plan for a campaign is the selection of one way among a thousand thinkable. The larger the warring states are and the masses they put in movement, the larger is the number of possible combinations, and it will then be, frankly, quite impossible to exhaust all of them. Therefore, to get a plan ready, one remains more or less compelled to produce a ready-made plan and leave it to the finesse of judgement to feel out what works and what is wrong: such [practical] understanding has a kind of musical feeling for truth, which easily distinguishes false conditions like discordant sounds. – So it is in practical life. – Here however, where we would make a clear example of the use of theory, we must diligently follow the threads of the *Vorstellungen*, to clearly construct the plan out of our *Grundsätzen* and through that give it the quantum of necessity that every philosophical truth has. It is hardly necessary to remind us that we are in a field very little suited for absolute truths; we are far from considering our *Grundsätze der Kriegskunst* as absolute truths, and even less the result that emerges from it [theory – the way of thinking] through an example [cf. Scharnhorst];...To bring this kind of thing [campaign] into the type of thinking that rules the strictly scientific, chiefly contradicts reasoning that is all-too-evident in the theory of war so that the author, without bothering about the beginning of the whole manner of *Vorstellungen*, has for some reason demonstrated backwards and forwards what he finds to be a very pleasant standpoint, to consider what is next most important and so conceptualise a kind of panorama of the matter with neither a beginning nor an end and which *pro* and *contra*, if and but, like a whirlwind drags a strudel crunched up into the air. *We do not consider anything we have thought as a merit of theory, instead the way we have thought it [the enquiry] through.*<sup>1215</sup>

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<sup>1215</sup> Clausewitz [1826-27], 'Strategische Kritik des Feldzugs von 1814 in Frankreich', Werke 7/10 (1835), 357-470, cf 360-61 (my emphasis). 'Jeder Plan zu einem Feldzuge ist die Auswahl eines Weges unter tausend denkbaren. Je größer die kriegführende Staaten sind und die Massen welche sie in Bewegung setzen, um so größer ist die Zahl der möglichen Kombinationen, und es wird, wenn man aufrichtig reden will, dann ganz unmöglich alle zu erschöpfen. Darum bleibt man auch mehr oder weniger immer dabei stehen, einen fertigen Plan hinzustellen und es dem Takt des Urteils zu überlassen das Treffende wie das Fehlerhafte desselben herauszufühlen...ein solcher Verstand hat eine Art musikalisches Gefühl für die Wahrheit, welche unreine Verhältnisse wie mistöne leicht unterscheidet. – So ist es im praktischen Leben. – Hier aber wo wir an einem Beispiele die Anwendung die Theorie klar machen wollen, muß uns freilich daran gelegen sein den Faden der Vorstellungen einmal genau zu verfolgen, den Plan aus unsern Grundsätzen klar zu konstruieren und ihn dadurch gewissermaßen die Notwendigkeit zu geben welche jeder philosophische Wahrheit hat. Es braucht uns niemand daran zu erinnern daß wir uns in einem Felde befinden welches für absolute Wahrheit sehr wenig geeignet ist; wir sind weit entfernt unsere Grundsätze der Kriegskunst für absolute Wahrheiten zu halten, und eben so wenig das Resultat welches sich in einem Beispiele aus ihnen ergibt;...Diese Art die Sache in diejenigen Formen des Denkens zu bringen die in den strengen Wissenschaften herrschen, is hauptsächlich der Art von Rasonnements entgegengesetzt die in die Theorie des Krieges allzugewöhnlich ist, daß der Autor, ohne sich um den Anfang der ganzen Vorstellungsweise zu bekümmern, aus irgend einem ihm besonders

Clausewitz's purpose was simply to make a philosophy of strategy, a philosophical construction of the *Kriegskunst*, with command of the Prussia army foremost in mind. Chapter 7 pointed out that he regarded a philosophy as missing even among proficient players. In addition, a coherent way to think and justify strategic advice among the general staff officers was missing, thus, there was a lack of a proper foundation for military education. Chapter 8 noted his objection to the present curriculum at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule*.

The way to think and analyse strategy was a fruit of theory, and not the individual propositions *per se*, which most interpretations put under scrutiny. Precepts for the art of war, *die Grundsätze der Kriegskunst*, were not absolute, but temporary and didactic devices for grasping the approximate to translate into action, subject to continual and circumstantial reconsideration. He had obviously foremost in mind the military and political élite of Prussia.

*§13. The warlike element was a theoretical quest for realism*

The present work argues that a very important aspect of Clausewitz's ideas addressed the problem of disconnected visions and realities, which rendered strategic thought dysfunctional. He distilled the warlike element as a theoretical response to the appearance of warlike energy beyond doctrine and the lack of realism in predominating political-military visions. The wars released by the French Revolution, 1792-1815, were dreadful and violent events heavily charged with unprecedented momentum, especially after the 'reckless Bonaparte' had usurped power, the 'most foolhardy player of all time'. Clausewitz made these events epitome for his theorizing of the warlike element. He argued that the French Revolution had released the dreadful warlike element in European politics. Chapter 7, the Seeds, explained his *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element, which he developed into a *Grundvorstellung*, elucidated in chapter 9.

Clausewitz found 'philosophical truth' by redeveloping enmity in first principles. He tried to develop a way of thinking strategy not wishful but consistent, not one-sided but dynamic and an awareness that conventions sometimes fail. Moral conventions depended in the end on the will of the enemy to comply, thus not necessary in any formal sense. His experience told him that the old way of thinking had failed, ultimately proven by the horrible course of events causing the implosion of old Prussia; from Jena in 1806, via the disgrace of Tilsit in 1807 to Bonaparte's ultimatum in 1812.

*§14. The warlike element was derived from realizing history as effect*

According to Clausewitz, military thought had during the Enlightenment, in a historical process, resigned from 'der Krieg' to become lost in intellectual speculation, chasing the enigmatic '*Kriegskunst*'. Clausewitz deeply refuted this predominant way of military thinking, which he pejoratively labelled 'scholarly strategy', not least because

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angenehmen Standpunkte heraus rückwärts und vorwärts demonstriert, daß nächte für das Wichtigste hält und so eine Art von Panorama von dem Gegenstande entwirft, das weder Anfang noch Ende hat und welchem Pro und Contra, wenn und aber, wie wirbelwinde ihre Strudel in der Luft kräuselnd zihen. Nicht was wir gedacht haben halten wir für ein Verdienst um die Theorie, sondern die Art wie wir es gedacht haben.' (my emphersize)

it had rendered his country unprepared, unfit for modern war. In 1818, he explicitly pinpointed the reign of Louis XIV and the 1670s as the time when the military 'engineering principle' to war had started to dominate European military thought. This approach nurtured a view of war as a matter of design, accessible to genius only. Some, such as Bülow, explained the conduct of war as a craft, as a sole matter of proper education according to visible scientific principles. Chapter 3 explained that Clausewitz labelled Bülow a '*militarischer Kinderfreund*', since his simplification made every novice into a military expert in a few hours of study.

This chapter noted also that Clausewitz observed already before the battle of Jena and Auerstedt that important military ideas had disappeared from military thought during the Enlightenment. Chapter 7 argued that the major work originated in a basic historical interpretation, an insight fully derived in Koblenz in 1816-1818, which recognized a dichotomy of war as natural and conventional. Conventional war was epitomized by the appearance of war during the Enlightenment. He understood war in this period as neat events more political than warlike; as such restricted by modest political interests and a growing moral canon. War was always conducted with 'counterweights' and respect for the sovereign.

The perennial military strategic principles of war in the style of Bülow and Jomini reflected this intellectual ideal, a style of explanation and doctrine that remarkably still surfaces in military thought. The French Revolution had evoked natural war, i.e. the warlike element, more or less explained as lurking behind the intellectual screen of conventional war in Clausewitz's interpretation.

His perception of multiple intellectual frameworks covering fundamentals triggered him apparently to write more about strategy than just clear definitions. The theoretical standpoint was essentially derived from an interpretation of the impact of general progress, which had brought about different intellectual frameworks, more wishful. Note that Clausewitz realised history as effect and his interpretation resembled the meaning of the modern term paradigm.

*§15. The Urbestimmung: the doctrine of the warlike element –  
war is essentially dynamic enmity*

Chapter 9 pointed to a note, used as a chapter in the early drafts, probably written in Koblenz that explained how Clausewitz intended to make a theory of the conduct of war possible. He argued that the strategist had to understand first, what war was; secondly, what war should do; and thirdly, what war could be. This standpoint fairly well explains why he wrote as he did. His major work was a clarification of the doctrine of warlike element for strategic thought.

On principle, the recourse to force and war implied the risk of escalation, brutality, annihilation and the state of overthrow, not necessarily but anyway a potential risk never to underestimate. The tendency reflected, more or less, war simply before *Kriegskunst*; moreover the problem of fluctuating warlike energy. Impetus, enthusiasm for combat and resistance differed. The effects of victory and defeat were fickle, thus warlike action could have a reverse effect to the logical and intended.

That war essentially encapsulated *Wechselwirkungen*, i.e. reciprocal action and effects, difficult to predict, that could drive war towards the utmost, beyond purpose. Combats, campaigns and wars were to be considered as open-ended activities, both as constructions and as unfolding of events. These basic conditions encapsulated in the warlike element created a certain atmosphere of war, which influenced the making of strategy and policy. Thereof, the importance of studying war as particular cases, hence to understand the psychological dimension, the talent for venture and using the element of chance in strategy.

The warlike element, i.e. the logical core of war pure and simple, was successively expanded and used as reference in his further enquires. He argued, up to around 1827, that the logic of force, the swift quest for decision, was present in all wars, but modified by circumstances and certain conditions, for example friction, that twisted the appearance of the warlike element in real life. This was his way of theorizing the concept of war, or more precisely the warlike element, outside of the concept of the state. The doctrine of the warlike element was his way of disproving old theory of strategy in terms of *Kriegskunst* and *Kriegswissenschaft*.

*§16. The second viewpoint: Vom Kriege is the clarification of the doctrine of the warlike element for strategic thought*

*Vom Kriege* can in a philosophical sense be considered as an investigation of the doctrine of the warlike element for strategic thought. Clausewitz started by stipulating a definition, rooted in the *Urbestimmung*, which he developed in a straightforward manner. Chapter 11 explained that Clausewitz faced the problem of conceptualizing the reciprocity of attack and defence around 1826-1827. He wrote then the 'undated note' and told us that he was only satisfied with his first chapter, i.e. the text outlining the first *Grundvorstellung*, his basic view of war as the dynamics of hostility and force. This philosophical approach explains why he considered the element of *Politik* outside the scope of enquiry for as long as he did. He investigated and theorized the warlike element. The element of *Politik*, the political side of war, was to be addressed in the final book on the war plan.

Basically, Clausewitz's philosophy of strategy was an investigation of the doctrine of the warlike element. It disproved, more or less, prescription of absolute values, i.e. absolute right and wrong, in favour of the approximate due to the dynamics of the warlike element. To Clausewitz, the *Geist* of modern war and strategy was encapsulated in the warlike element. The problem of conceptualising the forms of war in defence and offence made him adjust his ontology of the warlike element and the concept of theory. Chapter 12 explained Book 8 as a phase of transition towards this adjustment. The element of *Politik* was finally used to save the warlike element. This element was made the womb of the warlike element, providing the lineaments of war. Note that Clausewitz's adjustment switched analytical point of view, to modify the ontology, from a given *Urbestimmung* modified in reality to considering real war as a product of context essentially created from the reciprocal power of the 'fickle trinity'.

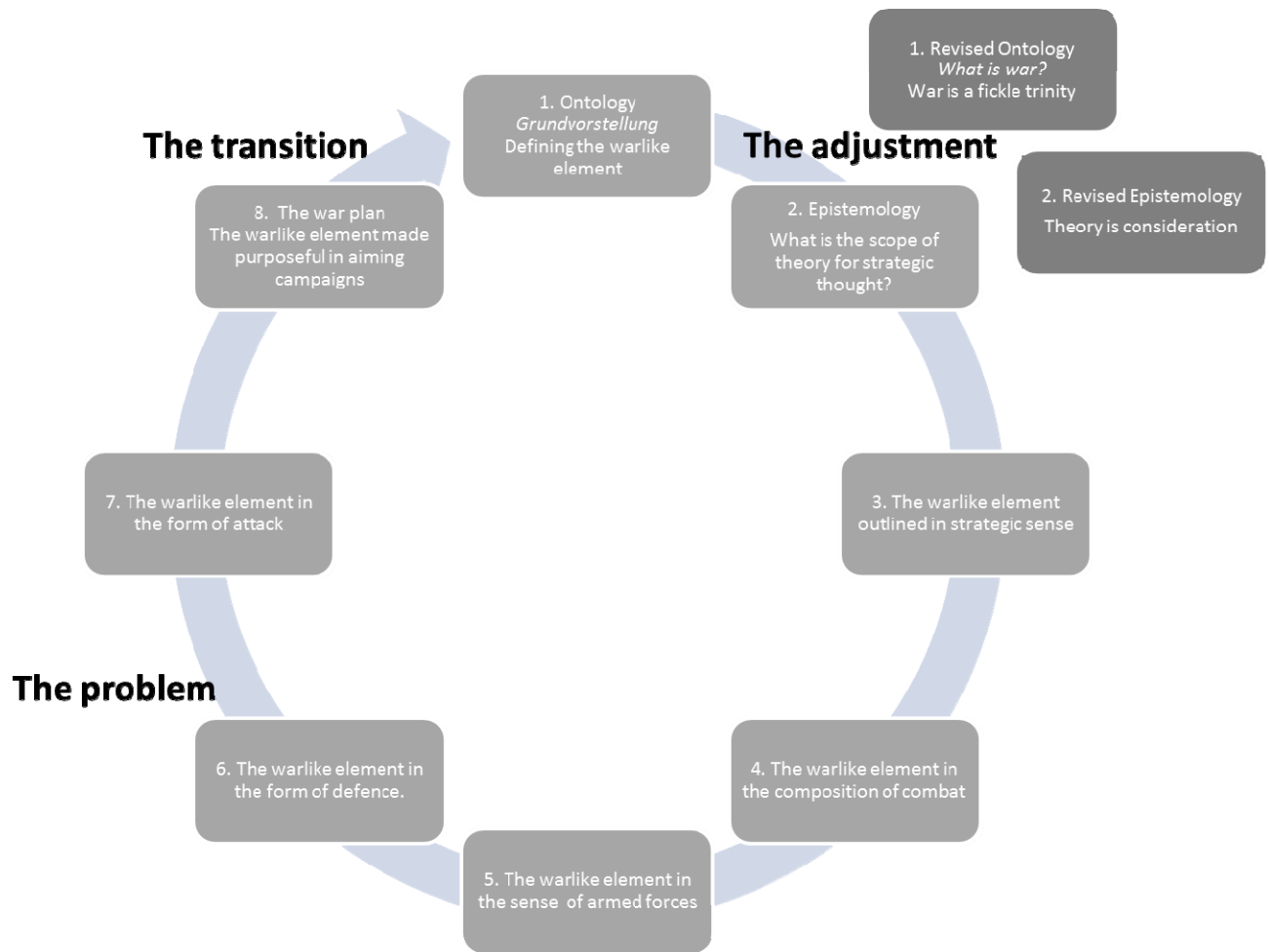


FIGURE 6 THE ANALYTICAL PATH FROM *GRUNDTVORSTELLUNG* OF THE WARLIKE ELEMENT TO REAL STRATEGY IN THE WAR PLAN

§17. A positive theory is not feasible – theory is consideration  
*Vom Kriege* was strategic doctrine expressed in another way

Clausewitz's initial ambition was seemingly to construct a philosophy as a *Lehre*, a teaching of strategy derived from theorizing the warlike element. The problem and the transition in 1827 made him rethink the initial *Grundvorstellung* and the ontology of the warlike element. Ultimately, theory for the *Kriegskunst* was conceptualised as *Betrachtung*: 'Theory should be a consideration and not a teaching.'<sup>1216</sup> This could be seen in relation to tactics, which still could encompass a greater element of instructions derived from experience. Still, Clausewitz's epistemology and ontology of war has merits to understand fundamentals about strategy. This conception was not far from Scharnhorst's approach.

<sup>1216</sup> Clausewitz [1827-28], 'Über die Theorie des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 2:2, 279-300, cf. 290. 'Die Theorie soll eine Betrachtung und keine Lehre sein.'

Theoretically, *Vom Kriege* nests in the ontology of the warlike element – hence fighting, i.e. combat-campaign-war as an open-ended activities, finally arising from particular conditions of *Politik*. The work had a practical scope with an innovative presentation that varied in the level of abstraction. The traditional format of doctrine in prescriptive terms, i.e. the engineering principle of war, was not suitable to strategy and the conduct of war; therefore theory, hence also doctrine, should be consideration. To learn to distinguish the important in the case, rather than to prescribe what to do before the actual problem had occurred. Practically, *Vom Kriege* was therefore also strategic doctrine expressed in another way. Theory, hence strategic doctrine, is about proper military *Bildung* to foster analytical clarity and realism.

Thinking according to a belief in perennial military strategic principles in the manner of Lloyd, Bülow, Jomini, Fuller, and Liddell Hart among many others may be easy and attractive; for practice to find easy guidelines and for academic study to compare and criticize. But this way of one-sided thinking, detailed into visions of conduct, was clearly opposite to Clausewitz's epistemology and ontology of war. He had clearly the ambition to explain a proper way of strategic thought by theorizing the dynamics of the warlike element, which he had to adjust slightly. Clausewitz succeeded in clarifying a proper way, form, of strategic thought, but passed to the student of strategy the task of making refinements. Foolproof indeed, his critics say, but anyway a practical view of theory consistent with his standpoints and conclusions.

The New War scholars and also those who codified the 'modern Clausewitz' failed to understand *Vom Kriege* as philosophical construction of the *Kriegskunst*. Thus, as a philosophy of strategy, as a motor for reflection and study of strategy in terms of military *Bildung*. Basically, it is difficult to regard Clausewitz's modest scope and didactic view of theory as outdated, even for hard-core believers in technology, information and in the otherness of new wars.

Modern reading guidance in the spirit of the 'modern Clausewitz' suggests books 1, 8 and sometimes also book 2 as the only ones still relevant. The present work argues that this way of reading fails to recognise Clausewitz's overall point. The student of strategy should read *Vom Kriege* with the analytical structure above in mind. The merit of the work lies in the complete analysis and presentation. The complete structure reflects the overall form of strategic thought Clausewitz tried to clarify. In addition it makes the major analysis and the theoretical result visible as well as understandable.

*§18. The warlike element was a warning and an apprehension about the future*

Clausewitz and others believed and feared that the next war would follow the violent pattern of the War of Liberation, simply because the '*künstliche Umwallung*', the old conventional fortification of war was now broken morally, politically and militarily. Everybody had now seen 'what war could be'. This simply motivated his way of theorizing strategy, as a clarification of the warlike element to trace effects and relations relevant to present conditions. Chapter 13 explained that Clausewitz in the autumn 1827 observed explicitly the effects on war of the new political framework of Europe with Metternich as architect. This made war limited again, which probably also



contributed to the adjustment: to view war simply as a continuation of *Politik* with modified means.

Theoretically, the warlike element and tendency to hate and hostility in the fickle trinity reflected a fundamental risk, always lurking behind conventional screens among people regardless of cultural and moral sophistication. Particular political events such as the French Revolution could trigger vehemence, hostile feelings. This condition allowed recklessness in the conduct of war, making war more warlike than traditional neat wars governed solely by political reason and a modest hostile intent. Clausewitz viewed this potentially violent dynamic as a fundamental risk to warn later generations about. The 'fickle trinity' depicted therefore the tendency of the warlike element; the intensity of hate and hostility as a '*blinder Naturtrieb*', i.e. a blind instinct or impulse. Unfortunately, the historical record strongly suggests Clausewitz was right in his warning.<sup>1217</sup>

Clausewitz had the Napoleonic wars as epitome. We still have, at least to a certain extent, the Second World War, popularised, as our epitome, as a reference in the background when we think about war. The Napoleonic Wars, the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War represent a steady escalation intellectually of what war can be. Clausewitz wanted to warn against reckless war, events like these, when war became 'warlike' rather than 'political'. However, we should also note these events, explosions, as intermittent exceptions in Clausewitz's way of thinking; as products of *Politik* rather than as products of military progression.

So, raw enmity, hostile feeling, was lurking behind the created conventional screen, regardless of culture and moral standard, and there was no guarantee they would not pop up again. It was not a military standard advocated as bringing victory, as some have tended to believe. Simply put, particular events could become a trigger, a political ignition of more warlike war, allowing for recklessness in conduct. Clausewitz's theory deserves continual attention and reflection. Therefore his advice; think strategy as war being a continuation of *Politik* in a broad sense, fickle in appearance and effects.

One aspect of van Creveld's criticism regarded the poor articulation of the law of war in *Vom Kriege*. Chapter 7 presented Clausewitz's practical motives. Prussia had failed, at least partly, due to disconnected visions and realities militarily-morally-politically. It was important to Clausewitz to clarify the effects of the warlike element. His ambition was to distill a form of thinking strategy that promoted realism. Therefore, it was 'theoretically absurd' to include moral conventions in clarifying the 'philosophical truth of war'.

At the time *Völkerrecht*, international conventions, was not law but moral philosophy. In addition, it was in a state of childhood, far from the standard of today's set of conventions. However, Clausewitz did not forget conventions, regarding them as part of the concept of state, thus the theorising of civilized life. His strict conceptual

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<sup>1217</sup> Compare the interesting account, though horrible, that supports Clausewitz's view, see: Sönke Neitzel & Harald Welzer, *Soldaten – On Fighting, Killing and Dying* ( London: Simon & Schuster, 2012, first in German 2011)

analysis, based on the warlike element, is perhaps the greatest obstacle to the modern reader, especially for those who approach *Vom Kriege* as a modern 'cook-book of war'.

*§19. The warlike element stereotyped into prototype for modern Operations*

The first generations of Clausewitz readers clearly and literally favoured his *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element; the logical string of force, combat, annihilation, and victory dominating the analysis until the twist around 1827. Colonel Scherff, the author of the first thick reading guidance to *Vom Kriege* in 1880, symbolizes the reincarnation of military engineering, in a more hostile form. His interpretation of Clausewitz was entitled '*krigerischer Krieg*', i.e. warlike war. He followed the logic of the warlike element literally and projected modern war as solely about annihilation.

The future commanders of the German Army, Ludendorff and Falkenhayn, were commissioned in the early 1880s. They were taught by Scherff's reading guidance that culmination only occurred in 'political war' and not in 'warlike war'; that limited aim was a 'historical form' of strategy, that Clausewitz's spirit preached the essence of war as bloody energy. With hindsight, these men were guided by professional patriotism and a stereotyped view of the warlike element on the road to Verdun to decide about 'the survival of the fittest' people in Europe. Note that Clausewitz's theorizing explains these events quite well.<sup>1218</sup>

The clarification of the warlike element underpinned the German development of *Operatives Denken*, which can be compared to Schlieffen's concept of '*Gesamtschlacht*'.<sup>1219</sup> He has been credited for the invention of the modern form of '*Operationen*'.<sup>1220</sup> Chapter 8 pointed to Clausewitz's basic view of strategy as creating a coherent effort. This standpoint was encapsulated in the theorizing of the warlike element. In 1909, Schlieffen argued accordingly that modern war relied more on the inner coherence of dispersed combats than on their spatial connectivity.<sup>1221</sup>

The German way of thinking '*Operationen*' simplified war to a grand battle, as a structure of combats to inflict annihilation faster than its enemy. This way of thinking was clearly inspired by Clausewitz's clarification of the warlike element, but neglecting his points about *Politik*, economy of war, recklessness and counter-effects. Soviet military thought adopted the modern form of '*Operationen*', merging combat and manoeuvre, as operational art. Some twists were made to reflect Soviet conditions. By and large, the military thinkers in the generations after Clausewitz held the view that

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<sup>1218</sup> For an interesting article about Clausewitz and the First World War see: Hew Strachan, 'Clausewitz and the First World War', *The Journal of Military History*, 75 (April 2011), 367-91

<sup>1219</sup> See for example *Operational Thinking in Clausewitz, Moltke, Schlieffen and Manstein*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Edited by Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Bonn: Mittler, 1989); Karl-Heinz Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende: Der Westfeldzug 1940*, 2. Ed. (München: Oldenburg, 1996); Dennis E. Showalter, 'Prussian-German Operational Art 1740-1943' in *The evolution of Operational Art*, Edited by Andreas Olsen & Martin van Creveld (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 35-63

<sup>1220</sup> Georg v. Sönderstern, 'Operationen', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, Jg.3 Heft 1 (Berlin: Mittler, 1953), 1-10

<sup>1221</sup> Graf v. Schlieffen, 'Der Krieg in der Gegenwart', *Deutsche Revue* (January 1909). I refer to the reprint in: *Ibid.*, *Cannae*, 3. Ed (Berlin: Mittler, 1936), 277

military thought should be kept military and simple, thus avoid the interference of politics. A view that comes short of Clausewitz's multiple points about the element of *Politik*.

The American introduction of operational art and codification of the operational level of war in the 1980s was framed as if the German and Russians had discovered something others had missed, a conclusion only partly true. Modern *Operationen* was the military compression of tactics and strategy to command and operate in a coordinated manner with large independent formations. It was conceptualised at a time when military thought expected future war to be most warlike; the heyday of mass armies fuelled by patriotism and major technological improvements of mobility and firepower.

The modern sense of '*Operationen*' was a solution that became a new military standard, a military paradigm. Our time has maintained this notion as a level of military command in bureaucratic terms and as a kind of military art between tactics and strategy fostered by way-pointing ideas from the major warlike wars of the previous century. Some have misleadingly interpreted Clausewitz's notion of strategy as equivalent to operational art. Seemingly, this opinion followed the view of strategy fostered by the Cold War. That strategy was made solely in the capital as a sort of policy.

#### *§20. The paradox of the warlike element*

In conclusion, realities are sometimes beyond doctrine and expectation. Clausewitz sought to clarify the warlike element to create theoretical realism to enhance strategic vision. He wanted to warn future generations against charged enmity lurking behind the conventional screen, allowing for reckless war. He believed in 1818 that his 'natural way' of thinking strategy would attract very few for the moment, but would become the universal standard in twenty years' time. He was right and obviously succeeded in communicating the warlike element to later generations of German military thought.

But his sharp logic of the warlike element was taken literally, and institutionalised as the universal model of modern war. In a way, his warning and theoretical response to reckless war induced the military professionalization of the warlike element to neglect other aspects and elements of his ideas. This was most likely not his intention, simply because it was beyond the possible scope of theory to make strategy purposeful.

#### *§21. The third viewpoint – Vom Kriege is Critical Strategy: the Critique of the Warlike Element*

Clausewitz's work has too often been read as a guidebook in the style of Jomini's way of explaining strategy, as a professional cookbook of strategic recipes regardless of problem. A similar problematic reading, claiming for itself a higher degree of theoretical insight however, is that *Vom Kriege* codifies war itself. The present work suggested in §17 that *Vom Kriege* was from one point of view doctrine expressed in another way, i.e. that a positive doctrine of strategy is not feasible, therefore doctrine, hence theory for the command of armies, should be study to foster intelligent observation.

*Vom Kriege* can also be seen as a work similar to Kantian critical philosophy as articulated in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. That involves subjecting theories, including those about philosophy itself, to critical examination. The task of philosophy was criticism rather than justification of knowledge. Kantian criticism meant judging the possibility of knowledge before proposing the knowledge itself. A critical review was to measure how well theories withstand criticism. In that sense, *Vom Kriege* can be seen as '*Kritik des reinen kriegerischen Elements*'. Thus a critique of the doctrine of the warlike element as *Gewalt* and hostility, as an act of force rooted in the idea of combat towards a war plan.

The approach of critical philosophy explains fairly well Clausewitz's train of thought. The warlike element was stipulated as a starting point, as a *Grundvorstellung* under scrutiny in book 1; while book 2 judged the possibility of knowledge before proposing the knowledge itself. The doctrine of warlike element is theorized, elucidated and evaluated in Books 3-7. In the later stages of analysis, closer to explaining how to think in order to make war purposeful, Clausewitz had to *partly* refute his initial hypothesis of the warlike element. It did not withstand the criticism, for example that the attack could defeat itself by the effort *per se*. The present work described Book 8 as a phase of transition in chapter 13. It was pointed out that Clausewitz described in the introduction to Book 8 that the work up to now had examined the many difficulties for reason to grasp the important and the risks of getting bogged down in thinking strategy. However, he also stated that his initial theoretical proposition remained valid. The overthrow of the enemy and consequently the annihilation of enemy armed forces were the natural major aim of the entire warlike act.

This had put his enquiry in a position to state that the basic means to accomplish this purpose was combat. Surrounding conditions and relations to combat, however, blurred the initial *Vorstellung*, as was proved by the nature of the matter as well as by experience. This implied a need to think anew about the initial *Grundvorstellung*. The utility of war, to make war useful in particular cases, was out of the reach of theory. Chapter 12 pointed out that Clausewitz adjusted the analytical perspective of the warlike element to be a product of context. Chapter 13 explained that Clausewitz investigated the *Grundvorstellung* in the essay printed as chapter 1 in *Vom Kriege*. *Politik* was used in Book 8 to save the concept of the warlike element. Clausewitz modified the concept of *Politik* and subsumed the warlike element, i.e. made it dependent, to the element of *Politik*. Thereof also his proposition: War, hence the warlike element, is the continuation of *Politik* with modified means. Accordingly, in the subsequent revising of theory in Book 2, he stated that a positive doctrine was impossible; thus a positive teaching of strategy derived from the warlike element was impossible.

A positive teaching is impossible. From the nature of the matter we must tell ourselves that it would be a pure impossibility to supply the *Kriegskunst* with a positive *Lehrgebäude* [doctrinal framework], which could everywhere be the outer grounds for action. The actor would always be in contradiction with this construction of teachings when he had to rely on his talent, [for] regardless of how multisided this would be, the same consequence would appear: that theory would be a contradiction of reality when the talented and the genius acted outside of the law of thought.<sup>1222</sup>

In conclusion, the fickle trinity depicted, in a nutshell, the challenge to make a theory of war, thus a positive theory of strategy. Book 2 explained the possibility of knowledge before proposing the knowledge itself, which in the final revised form stated that it was impossible to supply the *Kriegskunst* with a positive framework. Clausewitz's train of thought as salient critical analysis is remarkably ignored in the literature; it deserves our attention. Especially for those who read *On War* as a positive theory of war itself, or as a guidebook, to become proficient in strategy.

*§22. The fourth viewpoint - Vom Kriege is an attempt to ameliorate friction in terms of cognitive dissonance between civil and military perspectives of strategy*

*Politik* has been the single aspect that has attracted most attention and made Clausewitz famous, not at least since the end of the Second World War. This seems ironical, in terms he probably had not expected when he pushed himself hard to explain clever devices to think strategy more aptly than ruling accounts of military engineering. The English term 'policy' is obviously too narrow to grasp his growing more versatile employment of the element of *Politik*. Most generations seem to have had difficulties, in different ways, to understand Clausewitz in the sense of *Politik* or to accept his propositions.

For example, Scherff's reading guidance of 1880 did not grasp Clausewitz's points and refuted him bluntly in this aspect: 'The interference of *Politik* in the conduct of war will remain depravation forever. *Politik* indicates how the house should be built, but it should not interfere in the construction itself [the conduct of war].'<sup>1223</sup> Scherff was obviously influenced by Moltke's view and recent dispute with Bismarck. But his blunt statement indicates also that even a junior German colleague had trouble in

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<sup>1222</sup> Clausewitz [1827-28], 'Über die Theorie des Krieges', *Vom Kriege* 2:2, 279-300, cf. 289. 'Eine positive Lehre ist unmöglich. Bei dieser Natur des Gegenstandes müssen wir uns sagen, daß es eine reine Unmöglichkeit wäre, die Kriegskunst durch ein positives Lehrgebäude wie mit einem Gerüst versehen zu wollen, welches dem Handelnden überall einen äußeren Anhalt gewähren könnte. Der Handelnde würde sich in allen jenen Fällen, wo er auf sein Talent verwiesen ist, außer diesem Lehrgebäude und mit ihm im Widerspruch befinden, und es würde, wie vielseitig dasselbe auch aufgefaßt sein möchte, immer dieselbe Folge wieder eintreten, von der wir schon gesprochen haben: daß das Talent und Genie außer dem Gesetz handelt und die Theorie ein Gegensatz der Wirklichkeit wird.'

<sup>1223</sup> Wilhelm v. Scherff, Reading guidance to Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 4. Ed. (Berlin: Wihelmi, 1883, first 1880), 570.n.4 'Die Einmischung der Politik in die Krieg-Führung bleibt immer ein Verderb! Die Politik giebt an, wie das Haus gebaut werden soll, in den Bau selbst aber hat sie sich nicht einzumischen.'

understanding or accepting Clausewitz's range of *Politik* for strategic thought, ultimately explaining the essence of generalship not just in military technical terms.

As pointed out, Clausewitz had practical motives to write a piece on strategy. Prussia's strategic direction had suffered from immense friction. So, from a fourth viewpoint *Vom Kriege* can be seen as Clausewitz's attempt to ameliorate the cognitive dissonance, discomfort, between civil and military perspectives of strategy, hence to decide about the right course of action in the conduct of war. Clausewitz was not very successful in this respect. But friction is hardly a typical German problem; instead common and intimate to the making of strategy in the nexus of different perspectives under pressure from the atmosphere of war. The situation of strategic command, deciding in the dark, certainly fuels any latent quest for primacy, to decide what is right and what is wrong. History is full of examples that fairly well illuminate friction in terms of cognitive dissonance in strategic command.<sup>1224</sup>

For example, Moltke's way of thinking strategy was seemingly influenced by Clausewitz's theorizing of the warlike element and the reciprocal view of war it clarified, causing the special atmosphere of war. Moltke advocated a distinct view of mission command in political-military relations to make modern war successful: 'Strategy works best for the political hand, by the way of its purpose, however in action fully independent from this [hand].'<sup>1225</sup> This sentence strongly reminds one of Clausewitz's letters to Röder at Christmas 1827, which had depicted *Politik* as the 'hand', which 'geführt' war, i.e. warred. The letter expressed Clausewitz's modified view of the warlike element, that war did not carry its principles in itself.<sup>1226</sup> Moltke had read these clarifying letters. He agreed with the political function of war but preferred independent strategic command to utilize the tempo and dynamics of modern war.<sup>1227</sup>

Moltke's definition of strategy was simply as a system of expedients - '*Die Strategie ist ein System der Aushülfen*'. Strategy was the development of one original way-pointing military idea through changing circumstances, the art of action in difficult circumstances, thus in the atmosphere of war. Moltke projected, and refuted, political indetermination causing uncertainty, which most likely reflected his disputes with Bismarck. In consequence, Moltke argued that strategy had to strive for '*das höchste Ziel*', the highest strategic aim, i.e. decision, to cope with changing political will.

In the decades before 1914 German war preparations were perfected to be able to perform a clockwork concentration of the German army. The system of mobilisation

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<sup>1224</sup> See for example Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow, *The Essence of Decision Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2.ed (New York: Longman, 1999); Elliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003); *Strategic Logic and Political Rationality Essays in Honour of Michael I. Handel*, Ed. by Bradford A. Lee & Karl F. Walling (London: Cass, 2003); see also on the relation of Manstein and Hitler in Mugo Melvin, *Manstein Hitlers Greatest General* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2011)

<sup>1225</sup> Helmuth Graf von Moltke, 'Aufsatz vom Jahre 1871 - Ueber Strategie', *Moltkes Militärische Werke*, Vol2:2 (Berlin: Mittler, 1900), 291-93, cf.291

<sup>1226</sup> Clausewitz to Röder, 22.December 1827, *Schriften* (1979), 493-530, cf. 498

<sup>1227</sup> Marwedel, *Clausewitz: Persönlichkeit und Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes bis 1918*, 106

was tightly connected, in a complex system, to the state of being *Operationsbereit*, ready to commence operations, on the border of the selected area for large-scale battle. Thus, ready on favourable conditions in time and space to fight dispersed decisive battles as *Operationen*, to beat the clock and cope with Germany's unfavourable geo-strategic situation, squeezed between France and Russia. Somewhat simplified, the conduct of war and strategic thinking steered by the logic of the OODA-loop. What happened afterwards is well documented.<sup>1228</sup>

*§23. Ritter's critique of militarism and the intellectual attraction to political reason - the birth of the 'modern Clausewitz'*

Gerhard Ritter, most known for his critique of militarism in Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War, contributed to distilling the 'modern Clausewitz'. Ritter suggested in 1943, understandably, the interpretation of *Politik* as a solely moderating element in Clausewitz's ideas.<sup>1229</sup> That standpoint may be the normative-appropriate but Clausewitz's work was basically not a normative work as demonstrated. Ritter's definition of militarism is however salient. The problem of 'militarism' is the question of the proper relation of statecraft and warcraft, unsound one-sided beliefs, exaggeration, of military virtues, where the fighting side of politics takes precedence over shrewd political moderation in terms of statecraft.<sup>1230</sup>

From one point of view the element of *Politik* was clearly moderation and political reason, but it had clearly also an animating function for Clausewitz as the 'womb of war'. Chapter 13 explained that the element of *Politik* saved the relevance of the warlike element; hence made the 'absolute *Gestalt*' hovering in the background of every war, thus indicating the risk of escalation and that the opponent may use force unscrupulously.

Note that Ritter condemned the mentality of *Kampfgeist* and the lack of military-diplomatic manners that had ruled German military thought since Gneisenau. This ethos had driven Germany to destruction. Ritter's analysis put forward Metternich's shrewd *raison d'état* and political reason as a superior ideal. This can also be seen in the title of his major work, which projected the dichotomy of *Staatskunst* and *Kriegshandwerk*. The classic term *Kriegskunst* was substituted by labelling the military conduct of war in more simple terms such as warcraft, thus as a stereotype routine.<sup>1231</sup>

The constructed dichotomy of superior political reason and the devastating German military *Kampfgeist* degenerated into *Kriegshandwerk* underpinned the rise of the 'modern Clausewitz'. Germany became, understandably, a warning example. '*Der Kriegsphilosoph*' was reinterpreted, sanitized and cleverly used as a weapon to theoretically establish uncontested political primacy over strategy during the Cold

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<sup>1228</sup> See for example Holger H. Herwig, 'The dynamics of necessity: German Military Policy during the First World War' in *Military Effectiveness - The First World War*, Vol1:3, Edited by Williamsson Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 80-115

<sup>1229</sup> Ritter, *Die Lehre Carls von Clausewitz vom politischen Sinn des Krieges*, 41-65, cf. 47; Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, Vol 1:4, 95-96

<sup>1230</sup> Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, Vol 1:4, 13

<sup>1231</sup> See Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, Vol 1:4, 13-24, 60-124

War. As demonstrated, this well reflected Clausewitz's basic view of civil-military relations.

But as spin-off effect Clausewitz's ideas was pressed into a form sometimes alien to his points and dynamic way of thinking. The element of *Politik* became simply policy and political primacy, which is not sufficient. In conclusion, the 'modern Clausewitz' was rooted in the problem of the German *Kampfgeist*, militarism and political-military aggressiveness in a strategic sense. The problem of not getting trapped, hence to maintaining perspective, striking the balance between fighting and negotiations, is a perennial dilemma in the making of strategy. Clausewitz helps us to comprehend this problem, to understand and be aware of the road to the culmination point.

*§24. The hypothesis of intellectual rupture in 1827 as evidence  
for the 'modern Clausewitz' must be refuted*

The Introduction, chapter 1, explained that a long narrative has step-by-step projected a fundamental gulf, a rupture, in Clausewitz's ideas, which remains the most powerful explanation of them. Some have depicted him as Janus, as before and after his 'great insight' of 1827, a naïve 'idealist' who turned into a mature, proper 'realist'. Or, following a liberal view of war, some have seen him as turning towards the 'good', as he realised political primacy over the conduct of war via historical studies; suggesting that politics as pure reason must govern war. Some have therefore suggested a twofold mind-frame to grasp his ideas, implying pre-eminence of the latter, consequently suggesting that he intended to rewrite the whole manuscript, due to his 'insight'. But this reading clearly misunderstands Clausewitz's points, theoretical approach, adjustments and thinking.

The present work argues that the element of *Politik* and tendency to be a subordinated tool was always present in Clausewitz's ideas. Thus, the element of *Politik* was not new to him in 1827, as some suggest. However, in following the warlike element he did regard the element of *Politik* outside of theoretical scrutiny. Many interpretations fail to understand the scope of his late points about *Politik*, when the focus is solely on policy or combat. He actually made a sophisticated intertwining of war and *Politik* for strategic thought, and this was a major theoretical achievement.

Clausewitz did not develop political primacy; in fact *Vom Kriege* does not contain the word '*Primat*' at all. In practice the ruling aspect of *Politik* in terms of statecraft and policy was self-evident by tradition as demonstrated, often however neglected in military literature. Apparently, the lack was reinforced by the 'military engineering' mode of thought to discover the sole mystery of *Kriegskunst*. He developed the notion of *Politik* during the course of analysis, but not to the extent that he radically changed his mind. Clausewitz's ideas evolved of course from the time as *Stabskapitän* in the shadow of Austerlitz in 1805 to the time he spent theorising as *Generalmajor* in Berlin in 1827, sick but safe. The context of military thought matters.

The present work argues that the development of *Politik* around 1827 was more of a steady sophistication of close ideas. At this point, the adjustment was about fine-tuned analytical problem-solving to create theoretical coherence. It simply saved his hypothesis of the warlike element and justified the warning against the risk of potential new reckless wars in the style of Bonaparte. Consequently the element of



*Politik* both animated and restricted warlike action in Clausewitz's framework. It is simply wrong to interpret Clausewitz as realising the role of *Politik* only in 1827 and believing that this idea rendered his earlier writings irrelevant or assumed precedence. I now survey Clausewitz's growing understanding of the element of *Politik*, based on the nine aspects broadly outlined in the Introduction.

*§25. Politik as the proficiency of ruling – the dichotomy of Regierungskunst and Kriegskunst*

*Politik* as the proficiency of ruling rooted in Machiavelli presupposed a very close relation to the proficiency of conducting war. Chapter three explained that this aspect of *Politik* was conceptually clarified for Clausewitz by the twin aspects of ruling as '*Regierungskunst*' and '*Kriegskunst*', i.e. art of governing and art of war. Around 1801 Scharnhorst taught, with reference to Bonaparte's performance in the Italian theatre in 1800, the old wisdom that the one who does not consider political prospects and military possibilities with a joint perspective has never achieved great things. He thus closely united *Politik* and *Kriegskunst* in performance. This was also something others noted about Napoleon.

The close bond was thus not something Clausewitz discovered or invented, as some faintly suggest; on the contrary it was tradition. The bond was however neglected in the professional military literature in the quest for the enigmatic *Kriegskunst*. Obviously, a ruler ruled also in war, and, used war as means of power to maintain or conquer. If the ruler was unfit or uninterested in military command he employed a commander under his direction, more or less as nowadays. Note that strategy is rooted in the proficiency of ruling.

Recall that Clausewitz actually developed his ideas in response to one-sidedness and fixed military patterns emanating from the 'engineering principle of war'. Clausewitz upheld a clear line between civil and military responsibilities even though he thought strategy as he did, actually intertwining *Politik* with military action. Clausewitz's style of strategic thinking was for high command in theatre as well as for overarching direction. It dissolves the contemporary distinction of operational art, military strategy and grand strategy as separate fields. Strategy his way was the combination, the merging of the political and the tactical. The scope depended on the problem. Democratic military education needs to consider the very fine line between the art of governing and the art of war to foster proper strategic thought.

*§26. Politik as purpose – rationality for conducting war*

Military activity had an obvious political function for Clausewitz, from his first texts to his last. This was tradition and nothing he invented, as has often been claimed. Clausewitz's lifelong basic device of *Zweck* and *Ziel*, i.e. political purpose of war and warlike aim to plan and evaluate campaigns, reflected this obvious basic relation of *Politik* and war. Basically, *Politik* reflected policy, that war was conducted with a political rationality in mind, which implied that the function of war shifted from case to case. This view underlay his ideas all the time, which detracts from the interpretation of policy as a key feature of the twist 1827.

Ultimately, war, campaigns, fronts and combats were political means, political weapons. His work made this perspective on warlike activity perfectly clear, clearer than older literature. This is a viewpoint Lenin and other revolutionaries endorsed, while military professionals have often preferred to overlook this perspective to keep the professional military field clear of politics. *Politik* was the yardstick to value military action. Kant's schema of higher faculties taught that art in general should be judged according to purpose and rationality. Clausewitz applied the same scheme for the *Kriegskunst* during his entire life.

The political and moral discourse of right articulated the function of war as coercion, which Clausewitz adopted. In that sense, he borrowed a set of concepts from moral and political philosophy to theorize strategy. So, on one hand, he consistently used the political motive and purpose in relation to available means to think strategy properly. On the other, he criticized the prevalent doctrine of *Politik* as argued in political life and moral discourse in Prussia for not recognizing the true sense of enmity. Hence, there underlies his work the fundamental problem of disconnected visions and realities in moral, political and military terms.

#### *§27. The dichotomy of Politik as might and right*

Kant's moral canon dominated political life in Prussia at the time when Bonaparte rose to power as the arbiter of Europe. In those circumstances Clausewitz, among others, perceived disconnected visions and realities. He did not believe in a *Weltregierung* as suggested by Kant; that a supragovernment above states would minimize the use of war. Clausewitz read early and preferred Machiavelli's view of *Politik*. Decision by arms was labelled the 'supreme court' of international *Politik* even at the end of writing *Vom Kriege*.

Clausewitz believed in the balance of power more than in conventions, which underlies his entire way of thinking strategy. He was probably disillusioned, that political egoism was real even under the principle of general progress. To use modern language; Clausewitz was a realist, understanding political being as dependent on military might.

The prevalent doctrine of *Politik* in 1827 was slightly re-conceptualized. His late and subtle adjustment that 'war fell prey to pure reason' probably reflected his experience of Bonaparte's deeds, as well as the disconnection of visions and realities in Prussia. Basically, the dichotomy of *Politik* in might and right, encapsulated by the tension between the Machiavellian doctrine of power and the Kantian doctrine of moral right, was adopted and developed by Clausewitz. As a comparison, Ritter in his 1954 study of militarism pointed out the recurring problem of defining *Politik*, as 'struggle for power' or as 'order of peace'.

The present work argues that the frank articulation of *Politik* in 1827 should be read with this dichotomy and his specific adjustment in mind. Note that Clausewitz was not a sole theorist of might. The elusive aspect of moral right was important indeed, even if he did not become a cosmopolitan in the Kantian sense. His view of the moral right for Prussia certainly influenced his ideas and behaviour. The moral right underpinned fighting power, to bolster public energy to fight for freedom.

*§28. Politik as order of society to bolster fighting power*

The order of society was recognized as fundamental to French fighting power after the Revolution. In Prussia fighting was a sole concern of the military and political élite before 1806. The French public 'enthusiasm' for combat created an increasing imbalance, as the new doctrine of freedom and order of society made fighting a concern for every free citizen. Note that Scharnhorst had in this respect a great influence on Clausewitz's ideas. Public enthusiasm for fighting underpinned the Napoleonic way of war and later the way fostered by the Prussian reform.

*§29. Politik as 'Anschauung und Gefühl'*

Schleiermacher's romantic conception of religion as *view and feeling* has merit for understanding Clausewitz view of *Politik* as ideology and idealism; thus, as impetus for the fighting spirit and militancy of people. Schleiermacher theorized '*Anschauung und Gefühl*' as independent of moral doctrine and metaphysics. In a similar way, to fight for the idea of Prussia and Germany embodied a feeling for doing the right and noble thing, above ordinary political quibbles.

Clausewitz and the patriotic reformers tried to convince the king to go to war to fight for dignity in spite of inferiority in 1812. They disapproved of prevailing policy for not being enough, honest and right, which the *Bekanntnisdenschrift* of 1812 reflected ultimately. The Prussian Movement and the 'Good Cause' were patriotic *Politik* with the undertone of doing the right thing, even if it contradicted the policy of the ruler and moral imperatives to avoid war. Freedom was after all also the ultimate moral yardstick for rationality and purpose in Kant's scheme. Clausewitz's defection in 1812 was political disobedience, but pursued with an ideological belief in a higher nobler cause in terms of moral dignity and freedom.

Our world differs greatly from the world Clausewitz wrote about. The information aspect is often referred to as a reason for a fading relevance of his ideas. But the moral question of 'right' played a great role in fighting in Clausewitz's age, too, which made information and propaganda important even then. The forerunner of the 'CNN effect' was clear and present even to Clausewitz. His friend Görres had started to publish the paper *Rheinischer Merkur* in January 1814 to combat French preponderance. It rapidly became so influential that Napoleon labelled it 'the Fifth Great Power', making it the origin of the similar labelling of the free press. Clausewitz clearly regarded the discourse of right as a force multiplier, especially for defence.

Clausewitz's experience and propositions point to a perennial dilemma for command. *Politik* in terms of ruler and policy is not always right, just or appropriate for a variety of reasons. The convention of Tauroggen in the final days of 1812 exemplified this dilemma for a commander quite well. To obey or to do what one thinks is right is a moral problem that requires recurring attention in democratic military education. Clausewitz's ideas take this delicate dilemma into account, which most interpretations gloss over in favour of viewing policy as an ideal reflection of 'pure reason'. There is of course no straight answer to the dilemma. But Clausewitz did not have a stereotyped understanding of *Politik* in terms of always intelligent, right and good. Yet *Politik* between might and right was the rationality for the art of war, and the yardstick to strategically judge military performance during the unfolding of events.

The supreme commander should act as an advisor to the political leadership, to observe the political dialogue, and give advice if necessary about realistic policy, which could be interpreted into proper strategy. A reflection, the political context and outcome will often set the moral tone to judge military commanders afterwards. This dimension makes military commanders' decisions even more complicated. The politician faces a similar dilemma. Both categories can be criticized whatever they do and achieve, depending on the moral and political views of the observers. We may recall Gneisenau as an example. This condition in fact makes erudite study of military performance more elusive and requires awareness of the play of contexts.

The 1827 adjustment included the dichotomy of enmity in 'hostile intent' (from policy, political rationality or more broadly as the desire of the ruler) and 'hostile feeling' (from view/idea and movement) to convey the very different amount of tension that arises in conflict. The latter was recognized as reflecting more warlike war, finally recognized also as a tenant of *Politik*. 'Enthusiasm' to fight was after all the vehemence of *Politik*.

The moral canon of freedom played a role for the rise of 'hostile feeling'. Basically, Clausewitz's model suggested that very different incentives depending on social order and moral doctrine can evoke 'hostile feeling' as a violent driver in front of interests and political reason. The latter was of course still present but the hostile feeling rumbled in front. Vehemence allowed a player to do strategy with high stakes and brutal main battles, pushing for decision regardless of risks and casualties.

### *§30. Patriotism and warlike virtues – Kampfgeist*

Patriotism and fighting for the country have often been understood as something nobler and higher than party politics among soldiers. That view reflected Clausewitz's basic view, but in the end he regarded this as part of the element of *Politik* as well. He spoke already in 1812 of how the political side of war influenced the warlike virtue of the army. van Creveld argued that wars of survival did not fit Clausewitz's rational and instrumental model view of war as 'policy by other means'. As we have seen, war for survival, the enthusiasm for fighting, was at the core of his ideas. That was the warlike element encapsulated. Clausewitz was in that sense also an apt political theorist, foreshadowing the historical course of events. The twist of 1827 and the broader point with *Politik*, the dynamics of hostile interest and hostile feeling were apparently not understood by van Creveld.

Basically, German military thought adopted the animating aspect of *Politik*, but then in terms of patriotism as more noble, standing above or beside party politics. Commitment and the will to fight for national survival in 'warlike war' became in that sense more than *Politik* in terms of policy and political reason. Schlieffen's fateful motto '*Schlacht ohne Morgen*', battle without tomorrow, in a way summarized Clausewitz in Wilhelmine military thought. The essence of modern strategy was encapsulated in main battle on favourable conditions and the outcome of this epic public event was open indeed. Thus, energetic hard fighting was tactically everything for the future of Germany.

The military patriotic string of *Kampf*, as willpower and fighting was also adopted as a basic tenant of National Socialism. Hitler cited at the end of *Mein Kampf* the

*Bekenntnisdenschrift* pleading for fighting in 1812 rather than more analytic parts of *Vom Kriege*. Erich Ludendorff symbolizes the apogee of military and patriotic interpretation of war and Clausewitz before 1939. He regarded Clausewitz as a historical figure preaching *Politik* as reason and moderation in terms of foreign policy in *Der Totale Krieg* (1935).

But the nature of war had changed since the days of the philosopher according to Ludendorff, who continued from Scherff's reading guidance and depicted modern war as extreme escalation. War was no longer different due to varying conditions of *Politik* in the terms Clausewitz had theorized. Ludendorff spoke of the '*Wesen des Krieges*' i.e. the essence, or temper, of war, in the singular form. Modern war was only about maximum effort, about people's will to live and fight for survival. A people's spiritual decisiveness was fundamental to '*Der Totale Krieg*'.<sup>1232</sup>

Karl Linnebach, the German Clausewitz scholar of the 1920-1930s, explained in a similar way the secret of warlike success. He cited an old German general speaking to a young *Wehrmacht* officer in Paris under the Arc de Triumph in July 1940: 'Only that one does with the entire soul succeed! That is the secret of every great success: one has to do it with the entire soul. You have now done it in that way. You have done it with a greater proficiency than we older people, even if we were there [on the Western Front] with our entire soul.'<sup>1233</sup> Ideological commitment, such as patriotism, in combination with warlike virtues, is typical to the notion of *Kampfgeist*, as very determined, ready to sacrifice, self-motivated soldiering for a higher purpose.

The idea of *Kampfgeist* can also be compared to Karl Schmitt's *Theory of Partisans* (1963), which outlined the partisan as the last remaining true essence of the political. Schmitt, catholic philosopher and Hitler's theorist of jurisprudence, regarded the political as conflict. The partisan was analysed from Clausewitz, Lenin and Mao to elaborate the political nature of friend and foe. To him the partisan was the ultimate exponent of the political in the sense of a true fighter.<sup>1234</sup>

Schmitt's view of the partisan was not dissimilar to the idea of citizen soldier. The soldiers of the revolutionary army were more committed than soldiers of fortune in the dynastic armies. Note that Stalin also used the patriotic valance to bolster fighting against the German invasion in 1941. He politically circumvented public mistrust arising from his previous deeds of brutal repression to secure power by branding the effort as the Great Patriotic War.

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<sup>1232</sup> Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg*, see especially 1-11

<sup>1233</sup> Cited in Karl Linnebach, 'Vom Geheimnis des kriegerischen Erfolgs', *Wissen und Wehr*, Vol 21 (Berlin: Mittler, 1940), 442-45, cf. 442. 'Nur das gelingt was man mit ganzer Seele tut! Das ist das Geheimnis jedes großen Erfolgs: man muß etwas mit ganzer Seele tun. Ihr habt das jetzt so gemacht. Ihr habt es besser gekonnt als wir alten, obwohl auch wir mit ganzer Seele dabei waren.'

<sup>1234</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen: Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen*, 2nd Ed. (Berlin: Duncker, 1975); see also Carl Schmitt, 'Clausewitz als politischer Denker', *Clausewitz in Perspektive: Materialien zu Carl von Clausewitz: Vom Kriege*, Ed. By Günter Dill (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1980), 419-47

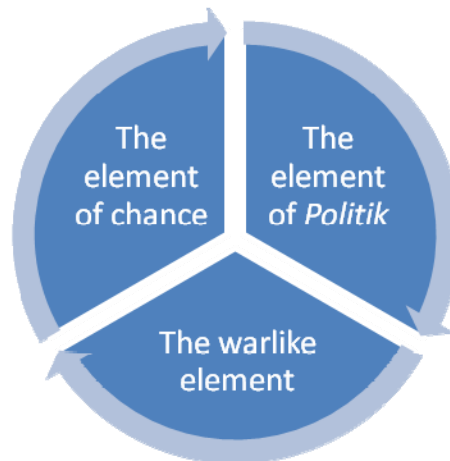
The present work argues that both narratives, viewing the key either in will-power or in political reason, lose Clausewitz's point. On one hand war can go reckless and explode from particular conditions of *Politik*, not just in terms of policy. On the other, warlike activity can 'defeat itself' through sheer effort, physically as well as morally, if not governed by political reason. Note that Clausewitz refuted war as a pure act of will-power for proficient strategic thought. But the animating aspect of the element of *Politik* transformed into hostile feeling and will to fight, *Kampfgeist*, was fundamental to the problem Clausewitz tried to theorise. Basically, that means that not just policy but every conviction; every '...ism' that animates hostile feelings can be interpreted according to Clausewitz's model.

*§31. The element of Politik saves the coherence of the warlike element  
as the womb of war, energising the conflict differently*

Clausewitz more or less turned round his way of analysis in the adjustment around 1827. From viewing war, i.e. the warlike element, as a strict, given conceptual logic of enmity modified in reality, he turned to viewing war as an 'empty concept' until it was individually energised by the element of *Politik* in the particular situation. His twist depicted war as '*zusammengesetzt*', a composite concept, which changed its nature in appearance.

In Romantic hermeneutical terms, that means the inner truth of war was slightly modified in every case for strategic thought. This standpoint was refuted by Ludendorff, as indicated above. Clearly, he understood Clausewitz's notion of *Politik* simply as foreign policy, political reason and moderation; as did most interpreters more or less during the Cold War. For Clausewitz however, the enthusiasm to fight was the most significant change caused by the French Revolution, thus underpinning the *Urbestimmung* of the warlike element.

The hostile feeling had rumbled in front of reason, which a reckless player like Bonaparte had been able to utilize to the utmost for his political desire. Chapter 13 explained that Clausewitz finally framed this type of violent explosion as exceptions, but hovering as a permanent risk in the background. The hostile feeling allowing reckless war was a specific product of conflict, rooted in tense political conditions. In that sense the variable animation of the warlike element and release of warlike energy were explained in a nutshell in the phrase he coined: 'War is the continuation of *Politik* with modified means'.



**FIGURE 7** THE MODEL OF WARLIKE ENERGY AS A CONTINUATION OF *POLITIK*

The element of *Politik* was developed in broader terms as the ‘womb of war’, indicating *Politik* as ferment, a process of fermentation. It provided the lineaments of the warlike appearance. The underlying conflict energized war individually through *Spannung*, i.e. tension. The more tension accumulated in conflict, the more warlike action was possible and required to deplete tension in the military sense. Simply put, warlike energy originated in the energy of *Politik*.

To understand the energy, tension, arising from the underpinning conflict was paramount to understanding the warlike element and to aiming campaigns realistically. In consequence the element of chance varied in scope. From Clausewitz’s point of view, the more war was about the whole, involving and affecting the people, the more war would tend to appear warlike. This condition narrowed the element of chance. Fighting would continue in spite of severe casualties. But the other way around, in more political wars the element of chance became more important to exploit.

In conclusion, the element of *Politik* charged and energised every war individually; players, commitment, motives and so on were different: that was to understand the particular nature of a war. On one hand war could be governed and driven solely by political reason, a ‘*Kabinettskrieg*’, causing limited energy for the strategist to employ. On the other, circumstances and underpinning conflict could evoke massive public energy, turning war into a ‘*Volkskrieg*’, igniting hostile feeling, allowing for reckless conduct of war to the utmost. The element of *Politik* was the medium of war; in that sense both animation and restriction. Consequently, the principle for action was hiding in the concrete conditions of conflict, which the strategist needed to consider and develop into appropriate measures. Note that the element of *Politik* saved the relevance of the warlike element according to Clausewitz’s adjustment.

*§32 The problem of distinction in peace and war for strategic thought*

The traditional view of peace-war-peace underlies Clausewitz's entire work. He used the term *Wechselhandel*, barter, to explain transition and bargaining according to the traditional model as early as in 1804. It seems very likely that Clausewitz's analysis, or critical analysis, of the warlike element up to 1827 was fostered by the view of peace and war in moral doctrine, as two distinct conditions of civilized life, even if reality often was different. We may recall that Clausewitz for example studied the Thirty Years' War and the Guerrilla war in Spain. Chapter 4 explained the reformer's desire and preparations for insurrection in 1808-1811. Clausewitz depicted the situation in the summer of 1809 as a slumbering hostility to be nurtured in awaiting and preparing war. Conflict remains, war is latent, or cold, the contenders awaiting the possibility of visible combat. Therefore the result in war was never final. So, the traditional view of peace and war as a distinct dichotomy was insufficient for strategic thought. It did not reflect the interplay of *Politik* and warlike energy in action.

The adjustment 1827 implied that Clausewitz had removed the clear line upheld by moral doctrine in the dichotomy of peace and war. He has been criticised for this twist, undermining moral doctrine. To keep the distinction of peace and war is morally very important. But for Clausewitz's theoretical purpose in terms of proper strategic thought, the traditional dichotomy was too simple, in a way too distinct for reality. The conditions of war were simply connected to the conditions of peace, which the strategist needed to consider.

Clausewitz observed that real war is always somewhere between theoretical categories. This view supported his choice to explicate war theoretically in the singular form, but with dominating tendencies in flux. Whether warlike action as a consequence of conflict takes place in peace or war is a matter of moral judgment, which needs continual reconsideration. The view is obviously different among actors and observers, depending on situation, culture, moral views and political rhetoric. War had consequently no military logic of its own for strategic thought, but was in principle always dependent on the circumstantial, broader conditions of *Politik*. The line between peace and war was not clear-cut; conflict occurred on a floating scale behind, energizing war differently.

The action of non-state actors may nowadays be local, regional and even global in a 'buffer zone' between peace and war, which pose dilemmas for states in using force. Basically, Clausewitz regarded war and peace as a clear distinction, not subject to modifications, as pointed out in chapter 13. But, he was also fully aware that rulers and diplomats did not view and use war in that clear manner for many reasons. Recall Clausewitz's observations in the 1820s, that the term war was avoided in Metternich's framework of European politics. In our time, military action is certainly not labelled war in every case. Many western countries simply do not want to become warring in frank political language and label their political activities as war; even if 'operations' include the use of combat to coerce, even topple, a political regime. This is another moral dilemma that needs continual reflection in democratic military education to think strategy clearly.



*§33. Politik as explanation of the lack of regular causes of success in cases of low tension*

As demonstrated in chapter eleven, Clausewitz had difficulties in 1826-1827 to explain how military causes of success could develop into precepts in cases of limited tension. A theory developed from combat and tactical victory was strong in cases of tense *Politik*, thus regular warlike causes for the outcome were more visible. When no real motivation for combat was at hand, the activities appeared more as 'political suffering' in awaiting peace. Consequently, there was no need or place for military precepts to develop for success close to equilibrium in the realm he labelled 'strategic manoeuvring'. Instead, strategic thought had to develop and exploit chance and other conditions than the results of combat to achieve purpose. Chance played here a great role, and prudence was noted as a quality of command rather than boldness. To 'play safe' via a coherent theory rooted in combat was neither always possible, nor appropriate strategy.

The figure below depicts Clausewitz's final way of thinking strategy. War becomes warlike and larger through tension when hostile public feeling starts to rumble in front of reason. Note that the notion of *Schwerpunkt* was only relevant in the outer perimeters of tension when war was more warlike and mutual strife for decision prevailed. In this realm the doctrine of the warlike element as combat, victory and decision was strong and congruent. This is also the realm that reflects the later approaches of operational thinking or operational art. Closer to the balance of power the regularity of causes of success were weaker. War was here more political. *Ergo*, war is the continuation of *Politik*.

Our age often seeks strong and congruent military theories even for cases of low tension, or with asymmetric motivation for combat. Clausewitz's conclusion deserves our attention for how we think about this type of strategic situation. Strategy was about balancing a realistic or necessary political purpose with means that could be mustered and constructed. Clausewitz's point was that a political ruler should not demand and desire results beyond available assets and the possibility of the situation, thus not act as a 'despot', wishful and one-sided.

To decide upon a political purpose and military aim in harmony with the situation was the chief act of strategic thinking. Clausewitz pointed to the need for a trustful civil-military dialogue to make this work. In addition, every strategic situation evolved, implying the need for continual reconsideration. In comparison, the younger Clausewitz propounded competence in combat as essential to success, while the older Clausewitz identified faulty political framing of military action as a major source of defeat.

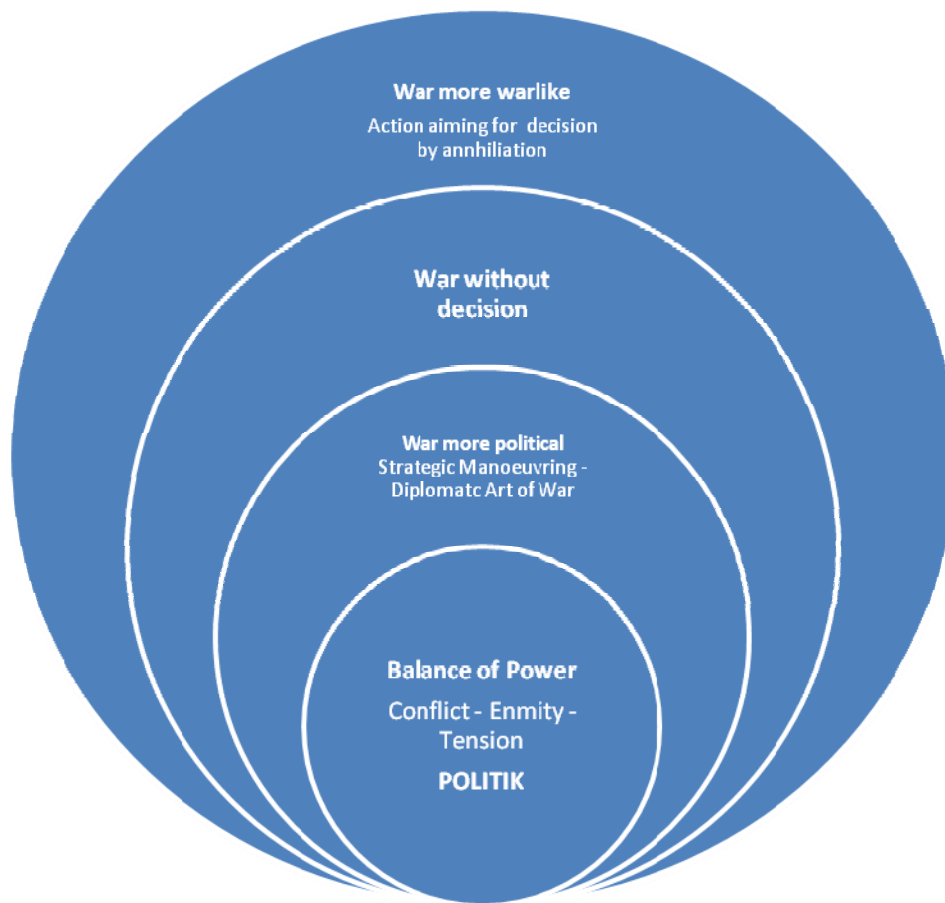


FIGURE 8 THE FINAL MODEL OF STRATEGY WHEN WAR IS CONSIDERED AS CONTINUATION OF *POLITIK*.

*§34. The double way of war was dissolved in the adjustment  
by reconsidering the element of Politik*

The *Nachricht* of 10 July 1827 frankly expressed *Politik* in conjunction with ‘the double way, or kind of war’, which has puzzled later generations of readers. In the process of elucidating the reciprocity of defence and attack Clausewitz found it necessary to create a dichotomy of war to think strategy properly. Aims of different kinds had of course always been present, but mostly vaguely expressed in theoretical terms as modifications of warlike element.

Clausewitz explicated two *Vorstellungen* – first war for the purpose of overthrow to convey grand-scale warlike events, thus also reckless war. Secondly, limited aim was developed as a *Vorstellung* to convey action close to equilibrium and respond to the fact that an attacker could defeat himself by the sheer effort of a too-far-reaching political purpose. Most interpretations, if not all, seem to overlook the fact that ‘the double way of war’ was a temporary solution in Clausewitz’s train of thought. This device has been interpreted as a new standpoint to underpin the view that Clausewitz’s intended to revise his entire manuscript, which he failed to achieve.

The present work argues: first, it was not a new idea but only a development of the historical interpretation made in Koblenz, which distilled the dichotomy of natural war and conventional war. Secondly, Clausewitz re-conceptualised *Politik* after the *Nachricht* and finally dissolved this device in Book 8. So this way of thinking was only used as a temporary device, apparently only during 1827 as pointed out in chapter 13. Consequently, to use terms like 'limited war' as some have done in rephrasing *On War* is against Clausewitz's theoretical point. War *per se* implied variation, unpredictability and the risk of escalation beyond expectations and conventions.

Note once more that Clausewitz used the element of *Politik* to make this way of thinking strategy coherent and to save the relevance of the warlike element. This undermines a critical evidence underpinning the interpretation of the 'modern Clausewitz'.

*§35. Politik as a shifting condition for exercising military command*

Clausewitz noted now and then that commanders had an individual political situation and relation to their political masters, which governed their freedom of action. Theoretically, historical cases were therefore to be considered as pure 'historical images' of life. Most commanders were not as free as Bonaparte; instead most were just cogs, controlled and tied up in complex machineries of state bureaucracies. The immense friction in Prussia's strategic command was pointed out earlier as one motive for Clausewitz's work. The element of *Politik* as a shifting condition for command diminished the prospect of general military strategic principles. The recognition underpinned also the 1827 adjustment.

Clausewitz's conception of warlike genius described a person able to endure, bargain and act hampered by friction. This renowned notion, often interpreted in terms of 'Murphy's law', was also a point about cognitive dissonance in strategic command; rival interests and opinions in execution, clearly with Prussia's internal conflicts in mind. However, Clausewitz accepted theoretically that human interaction at the top includes conflict. That was part of politics as well as deciding in danger and in the dark, not knowing the unfolding of events.

In his final framing, *Politik* was simply considered as a '*Sachwalter*', i.e. a pure custodian of all individual interests in a society against other actors, but never for the *Kriegskunst*. The art of war should not have any interests, i.e. the military commander was considered as preceptor (cf. lat. *Praeceptum*, in German *Vorschrift*, *Lehre*), thus as teacher, wisdom and advisor to the political ruler. On principle, this implied there could never be a military cause of war, never a military necessity and never purely military advice on a situation. Instead military advice and strategy presupposed a joint military and political view of the matter.

This means that the interpretation of the 'modern Clausewitz' is partly correct in projecting political primacy. The political purpose was of course the focus of military activity. But the scope of that activity was not just a matter of political desire, doctrine or wisdom. It included a military dimension as well, about which the military commander was supposed to give circumstantial advice, hence contribute to apt policy, possible to translate into realistic strategy. We may recall the implications of the 'reciprocal effects' in entering war; one is no longer in control of the situation. This

imperative relates to the military side as well as to the political side of strategic command.

The adjustment in 1827 included a larger responsibility of *Politik* for defeat as well as success. Clausewitz explained that the series of defeats against the revolutionary armies in his youth had primarily not military causes; he identified instead the root in defective policy. This finally refuted the idea of a new, more astute military system of conducting war, which had dominated military thought as an explanation of the defeats. Bad political analysis of the revolution had underlain the faulty and insufficient military response. Consequently, strategic thinking had to combine political and military analysis. This presupposes a moral and political attitude towards the strategic problem. Strictly speaking, strategic thinking viewed this way is not an apolitical, objective, military activity and this deserves recurrent pondering in military education.

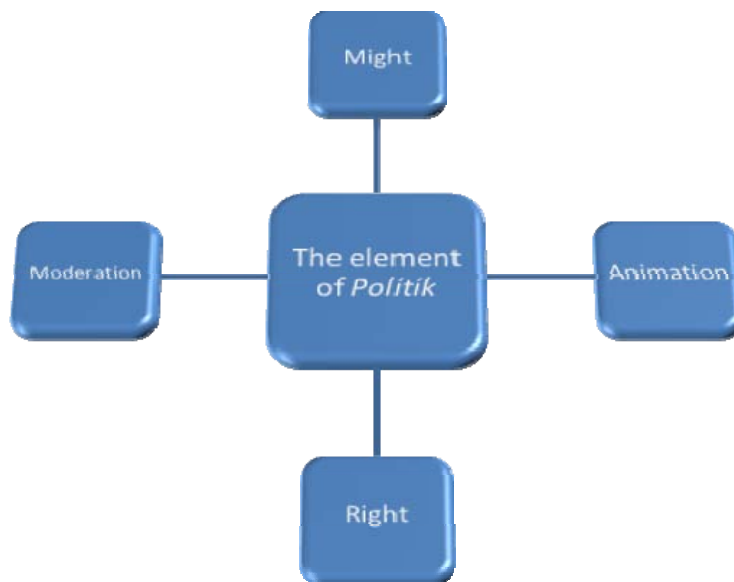


FIGURE 9 THE DUALITY OF THE ELEMENT OF *POLITIK*

### §36. *Politik* as hypernym to the concept of war

*Politik* as hypernym (cf. *Oberbegriff*) of the concept of war was adopted to explain the proper nesting of strategic thought as described in chapter thirteen. *Politik* implied per definition tension between power and morality. The adjustment in 1827 simply subsumed war conceptually under the concept of *Politik*, thus under the dichotomy of might and right, as well as animation and moderation, compare figure 9. In principle, military thought was a branch of political thought. Before this analytical standpoint,

Clausewitz had viewed *die Politik* and *der Krieg* in more equal theoretical terms, as two complementary concepts. Apparently, his view was rooted in the understanding of ruling as the art of governing transmigrated into the art of war in times of war.

*§37. The nature of war, hence the warlike element,  
is an individual continuation of Politik*

In conclusion, the present work argues that Clausewitz's interweaving of war and *Politik* started in tradition but was developed into a more sophisticated theory. In the course of analysis he refuted war as a 'military thing', hence the existence of a solid warlike element. Strategic thought cannot deduce and rely on a stable military logic from case to case. Clausewitz started by exploiting, or criticising, the warlike element as logic of enmity to falsify the military 'engineering principle of war'. He ended by intertwining the warlike element into the element of *Politik*, pursuing the same purpose. The context for strategic thought matters. Two strategic problems are never identical when the element of *Politik* in the broader sense is used as a larger framework for military action.

Note that even today some people continue to understand the nature of war as immutable and in singular form. This modern way of reading Clausewitz, as he argued that war was a dichotomy of a stable inner nature with a changing outer character, simplifies and misreads his final points. War *per se* had no given logic for strategic thought to follow to achieve success in Clausewitz's final form of thinking. The atmosphere of war, putting pressure on the ones in command, which makes the conduct of war difficult, is more appropriate to think of as immutable. To see things clearly in a strategic sense was labelled by Clausewitz as the greatest friction of all in war. It seems unlikely this 'abstract fog' will disappear as some have suggested due to technological sophistication. Problem-solving is an appropriate framing of strategic thought, at least for democratic military education.

Clausewitz wrote a theoretical response to 'scholarly strategy' to disprove theoretical speculation in a 'New System of War'. The French Revolution did not transform war itself; it only evoked raw enmity, the warlike element, and showed what war can be. The adjustment frankly attributed vehemence and warlike energy as tenants of the element of *Politik*. In addition, war simply falls prey to ruling, 'pure reasons' of various kinds, a tool for all sorts of desire between might and right. The warlike element was simply an individual continuation of the element of *Politik*.

*§38. War is a tool that falls prey to 'pure reason'*

The element of *Politik* and tendency of tool/subordination to 'pure reason' in the fickle trinity reflected Clausewitz's basic political view of the conduct of war, but also his theoretical ambivalence about *Politik* and enmity underlying the adjustment of 1827. The present work suggests that we should interpret Clausewitz's meaning of *Politik* in a broad sense. In addition, observe his subtle irony of doctrine; that war 'falls prey to *pure reason*'. For strategic thinking, war was a '*Werkzeug*', a tool to fulfil a purpose sometimes noble and just, sometimes on the back of moral doctrine. Practical reason decided the *rationality* of action, which in Kant's scheme reflected *desire* as driver.

*Vom Kriege* was a warning against reckless war by clarifying the consequences of enmity and the warlike element. The adjustment made war and the warlike element subject to the element of *Politik*, which was understood broadly between reason and a warlike motor. This view of the element of *Politik* rendered war a 'true political instrument' of individual reach.

The 'modern Clausewitz' lost important aspects, to the extent that the dynamics between the warlike element and the element of *Politik* was stereotyped. Actually, in a way that resembles the interpretations of the old patriotic '*Kriegsphilosoph*'. Both interpretations, archetypes, turn the Prussian into a normative theorist, which seems unfair to his theoretical result and critical analysis. Clausewitz should not be viewed as a normative military theorist struck by second thoughts. He was a keen observer of fickle dynamics, a critical philosopher in a quest for realism in strategic thought.

*§39. New wars are simply continuations of modern Politik*

After the Wall had crashed down, van Creveld suggested anew that 'war itself' was under transformation. A 'new system of war' was needed to understand war. This was a time when the United States stood as the only remaining superpower and on-going local and regional conflicts became the political focus. Precisely this situation underlay van Creveld's claim that the modern world had rendered Clausewitz's 'theory of war' irrelevant. As demonstrated this interpretation fails to recognize the major points of *Vom Kriege* and to understand Clausewitz's train of thought.

Theoretically, Clausewitz was a believer in the individuality of sophisticated things in the real world, such as war. Chapters 7 and 9 pointed to *Naturphilosophie*, which promoted that view of the world. Ultimately the nature of war, its inner truth for strategic thought, was a composite from its surroundings. Every war was individual and therefore a new war. Consequently, Clausewitz had a modest scope for theory, purely didactical in the end.

Van Creveld's interpretation was too narrow to grasp the wider implications and utility of Clausewitz's framework. According to Clausewitz's way of thinking, new wars are simply continuations of modern *Politik*, which require particular strategic consideration, as every case. The New War discourse includes many informative and interesting standpoints, but it resembles 'scholarly strategy' in the quest for a novel concept of war. The quest for novelty refuted the Prussian on faulty grounds: that said contemporary conditions need consideration. The present work suggests that contemporary conditions, still at the beginning of a new space of experience, can benefit from Clausewitz's work. His work is instructive to the difficulty to bring harmony between visions and realities. Clausewitz does not offer any solution, any strategy, but a frank vehicle for reflection about the important.

*§40. The element of chance – the talent to gamble*

The element of chance and tendency of war for '*freie Seelentätigkeit*', i.e. free human venture, reflected Clausewitz's branch of practical analysis that noted the quality of performance of commanders and fighting forces as individual. The tendency was rooted in the traditional military understanding of war as art. Clausewitz preferred to study the player, the artist rather than the art. He used the term *Spiel* as venture and

gamble, which also meant different perspectives, possibilities and outcomes. The psychological dimension was crucial, such as individual temper and inclination to play. Every commander and fighting force could cope with the atmosphere of war differently, which was to observe in consideration, and utilize in the making of strategy.

On principle, virtues rooted in Machiavelli; to act and use action, whatsoever, seize opportunity, calculate the probability of unfolding, take risks by entrusting to chance, such virtues were individual. War can in the strategic sense be constructed and conducted in infinite ways. Clausewitz had probably Bonaparte in mind, 'the most foolhardy player of all times' as epitome of this element. The Corsican's political conditions, appetite for taking risks and talent as a commander had enabled him to unite political desire and warlike action at an unprecedented level.

Genius was free to act outside regularity, outside the laws of military thought as Bonaparte's deeds were interpreted at Waterloo. But the other way around, not everybody could handle the atmosphere of war and wage war as 'the God of War' did. Note that Clausewitz's initial ambition was to make a theory that improved the understanding of chance, to 'play safer', at least in a theoretical sense. Thereof stems his hard logic based on combat and the result of combat as the real currency in war.

#### *§41. Spielraum*

We should notice Clausewitz's approach to the theoretical challenge posed by the fickle trinity and especially the element of chance – the tendency for free human venture in war. His basic trick was not to cultivate the 'theoretical plant' too high. Theory was never a substitute for practical judgement and enterprising spirit. Clausewitz tried to theorise *Spielräume* for practice to ponder, instead of clear-cut solutions and exact instructions. For example, the 'device of attack and defence' depicted an interspace between the two main forms of war, which the talented could exploit according to individual circumstances.

Strategic thinking in high command move back and forth between the political and the tactical/operational to create the strategic. Basically, the strategic was defined by the significance of action according to the purpose (cf. tool); i.e. productivity, counter-productivity and consequences in the unfolding of events. Basically, this means the strategic was nothing in itself; it arises from relations and reciprocity. Following this viewpoint, it is misleading to label certain types of equipment and unit as strategic *per se*, even if they 'fly high' and direction comes directly from the top. Strictly speaking all forms of physical military action using whatever technology are tactical, even if the reach is global.

The same applies basically to information warfare. However, propaganda, 'strategic communication', and subversion to influence opinions and frame action are basically political from this point of view. According to this classification the changes projected by the New War discourse are mostly tactical and political. Consequently, Clausewitz's subject matter, his form of thinking strategy and distinguishing the strategic remains more or less intact.

The present work argues that we should notice Clausewitz's theoretical approach to elastic clarification. A book could never fully resolve the problems in war, involving varying human qualities in reciprocal performance and the finesse of practical judgment. His response was to propose a fairly simple basic framework, which he explored by theorizing different '*Spielräume*'. He refuted the theorizing of strategy as detailed instructions, like guidebooks, according to complicated models.

We should observe his quest for a simple but well-thought-out military language to promote realism in military-political ideas and ambitions. One often says that the devil is in the details in military practice, but the other way around seems better to understand strategy properly. The devil is in the whole, hence the framework to think strategy should be simple and straightforward to grasp the important.

*§42. The intellectual attraction to decision, decisive battle and victory*

Clausewitz theorised the concept of combat by putting the main battle at the focal point, which was consistent with his experience. He described how politicians, theorists and generals had hesitated, tried to circumvent this definite event. Napoleon exploited this condition and made the main battle his primary weapon. The latter's performance and the former's writings made main battle a key concept for western military thought. The main battle was rooted in the underpinning conflict and fuelled by hostile feeling, the core of the warlike element, embodying the potential of great effects to be strategically utilised.

Military services have tendency for cultural and organisational preferences, nurturing pet ideas, generic aims and easily adaptable lessons. This inclination is still even present on the analytical level of campaigns and wars, which is clearly visible in the discourse on centre of gravity. According to the stereotype, army and navy have mostly discussed the destruction of main forces, while air force has tried to develop alternative ways of destroying supporting infrastructure or terrifying populations to lower morale. More recently, the key has been identified in leadership and the ability to communicate in command. The preferences are basically tactically oriented. Note that Liddell Hart wrote about the *Ghost of Napoleon* in military thought in 1933 and Corn argued about similar problems in 2006. The contemporary understanding of centre of gravity is rooted in the intellectual attraction to decision, decisive battle and to achieve victory at all times.

Operation Desert Storm is perhaps the latest and best example of modern large-scale main battle. The result in Kuwait in 1991 revealed most clearly contemporarily the American lead in high-tech manoeuvre combat, when it was confronted by a similarly operating enemy but less sophisticated. This case is also a good example of a strategy following the concept of *Schwerpunkt* in a straightforward manner. Thus, defence of one theatre of war by forcing battle on the aggressor's main force in hostile territory, utilizing the loss of equilibrium, the crisis, for exploitation. The operation, a regional main battle, became decisive for the purpose of liberating Kuwait.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was strategic offence to destroy the political being of Saddam Hussein, which encountered the reciprocal effect. A comparison of the cases, 1991 vs. 2003, illuminates quite well Clausewitz's argument about defence as the stronger form of war *per se*. The concept of combat may have global reach nowadays, but



operations still requires proper settings and exploitation of results to become strategic productive. Few actors are capable of large-scale main battle, or a global operation, with thrust. Clausewitz theorized the moral-political-military difference of offence and defence, which is still important, perhaps more than ever, to realize the elusive confluence of moral and physical forces.

Seemingly, van Creveld followed the stereotype of Clausewitz as the prophet of decisive battle in suggesting the dichotomy of 'Trinitarian Warfare vs. Non-Trinitarian Warfare'. Mary Kaldor argued in a similar way about modern 'Inconclusive War' to modify her view of 'New Wars'. She argued that Clausewitz had clarified war as always tending towards the extreme, which was not valid for new war.<sup>1235</sup> This is examples of how Clausewitz's analyse of the warlike element and logic string has been taken literally and out of context, losing sight of his overall points.

Clausewitz did not advocate the maximum use of force as a generic solution to every problem in practice as some seem still to believe. Basically, he wanted to improve pure pragmatism with a sound philosophy, to better understand the element of chance, to play safer in the end. This made him follow and investigate the warlike element, which brought him to the point of adjustment. Clausewitz had then theorised quite well how overambitious *Politik* translated into risky strategy and far-reaching military enterprises could simply defeat themselves by the sheer effort. Many still read Clausewitz as if he had a one-sided view of the warlike element, hence advocated the maximum use of force regardless of strategic setting. That reading does not pay attention to his train of thought and analytical result. Note that victory was a purely tactical concept, a means among others, in Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy.

*§42. War is a free activity of talent -  
the current trend of more players using available means*

To Clausewitz, *Kriegskunst* was about the use of available means, good or bad, small or large, old or new, for the purpose put forward. Theory did not decide the scope of war preparation. It was a fiscal question, therefore a matter of *Politik*. Basically, Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy and tactics did not bother of the mode of fighting or activity made. It was simply the intelligent use of ends and means, rooted in the primordial idea of combat. Theory did not prescribe the use of available means. To make war, campaigns and combat productive was not within the possible scope of theory. Thus, to make action purposeful was beyond theory.

Politically, the increasing number of non-state actors using force and fighting for a wide variety of desires and beliefs makes the political map of strategic thought more complicated. More and smaller warring factions can exploit the element of chance. But movements as political and warring actors within or among states are not a new phenomenon. Strategic thinking is obviously not bound to size, policy or the state. To be frank, Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy and theorizing does not bother if the

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<sup>1235</sup> Kaldor, *Inconclusive Wars: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant in these Global Times?*, 271-81

real-world actors are states or non-state actors. Strategy is also a way of thinking utilized to become recognized as a political being, for example like the IRA.<sup>1236</sup>

The potential strategic reach of current small stealth actors, exploiting the element of chance, may have increased somewhat in the modern interconnected world. Movements, non-states actors, using available means in an uncomplicated manner to fulfil their purpose reflect, more or less, Clausewitz's idea of the warlike element. To Clausewitz, war was naturally quite uncomplicated, the simple straightforward use of combat, force, for a clear purpose. This made warlike energy massive. Natural war was the contrast to the complicated *Kriegskunst* of the Enlightenment, thus conventional war. Clausewitz experienced a change of paradigms and his effort to understand that change can be of help to understand so-called 'New War'

Contemporary interventions are mostly to be seen as 'more political' according to Clausewitz's model. These often confront more energised movements primed with hostile feeling prepared to make war more warlike, and this may cause asymmetric impetus for combat. The modern interconnected world makes communication and propaganda effective instruments for political influence due to this asymmetry. If states are pushed into the corner and a profound hostile feeling starts to rumble, the weight of information is inclined to change as well as the moral line delimiting what is accepted.

The tactical modification of the weak has been a steady refinement of old ideas. The most significant modification is perhaps the possibility of instant global communication and the miniaturisation of destructive means. It is striking how cheap dispersed combat among people, extended in time, can endure and provokes the use of extremely expensive operations in response. Disproportionate costs threaten the strong to win 'Pyrrhic victories' and reach the culmination point in fiscal, moral and political terms.

A potent tactics of the weak is still not to fight alike, but to fool and tempt the strong to commit the mistakes that can become strategic. Thus, numerical and physical strength is only one component of the equation; moral and psychological aspects such as mistakes and talent for venture still count. In spite of many new non-state actors, the state remains largely the most powerful political actor in using force. Clausewitz's way of thinking strategy, intertwining the political and the tactical, is perhaps more relevant than ever, due to the political nature of intervention and the more blurred map of actors and interests.

The present work argues that contemporary political and tactical modifications do not render Clausewitz's basic form of thinking strategy irrelevant. On the contrary, his conclusion that strategy should be thought as war being a continuation of *Politik* is as relevant as ever. In addition, that the art of war essentially is the use of available means for the purpose put forward is an apt definition. The art of war is not bound to war preparations and models. Military education should cultivate judgement and

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<sup>1236</sup> See for example M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland: The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995); James Dingley, *The IRA: The Irish Republican Army* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012)

imagination to use available means, instead of striving for perfect models in theory. Basically, it is a mistake to believe, like van Creveld argued, that the tactical currents of dispersed combat and political currents of new actors render every basic military concept irrelevant.

Time has always been an important aspect to 'weaponize' events in a strategic sense. Note that Clausewitz argued that a slow strategic effect is not less worth than a rapid. Every strategic effect takes time and the use of duration is the other side of the coin in relation to main battle and decision. We sometimes have difficulty to accept and understand this, because time costs, uncertainty remains and endangers. In a way, it is against the logic of war we have inherited, nurtured by generations, not infrequently reinforced by reading Clausewitz selectively.

#### *§43. The intellectual attraction to centre of gravity*

The present work has tried to clarify *Schwerpunkt* – the origin of the current use of centre of gravity; how Clausewitz developed *Schwerpunkt*, or actually borrowed the term, and regarded it as one approach among many to aim campaigns properly. It was certainly an important concept at the core of his ideas. The relevance of *Schwerpunkt* was to be found in the outer perimeters of tension. Thus, in the wars Clausewitz used as theoretical epitome until 1827, such as the campaign of 1815 or Bonaparte's failure in 1812 to disintegrate the Russian army (cf. fig 8).

This way of thinking strategy was rooted in the theorizing of the warlike element, as every action had only merit for the final purpose. But Clausewitz depicted a broader panorama with no clear borders. In the midst close to equilibrium every act had a weight of *Politik*. Note that Tomas Schelling became famous by posing a resemblance dichotomy of brute force and coercion, but forgot to tell about the origin. However, Clausewitz went further and adjusted the element of *Politik* to dissolve the dichotomy of different ways, or kinds, of war as demonstrated. The adjustment around 1827 simply restored the coherence of war and a fluid scale of action for strategic thought.

*Schwerpunkt* presupposed a politically coherent opponent, a constellation of military actors dependent on or following the same *Politik*; otherwise the strategic problem could not be reduced and compressed into one climactic effort. With no hard links, dependence, the prospect of effects faded away. *Schwerpunkt* was about to strike the foundation of opposing political power, the strength allowing political being. This was of course never a bridge or a system of communication, as centre of gravity might reflect the matter nowadays; neither was it about killing the ruler one should negotiate peace with. *Schwerpunkt* was equivalent to *Ziel*, the strategic aim of a campaign, not a generic description of success with every military objective. The term aim reflected exactly what it sounds like, the aiming of a campaign.

Remember, combat, campaign and war were free constructions and open-ended activities developed from a political purpose and a political-military situation. If the political purpose was to topple or overthrow the opponent, then one had to strike the foundation of political power. This, however, was neither always possible nor desirable nor politically shrewd. The use of *Schwerpunkt* as a device to aim a campaign presupposed, and produced, a warlike situation with strong tension. To strike the *Schwerpunkt* and dismantle a ruler did not guarantee a favourable unfolding. We may

recall Clausewitz's view of the tricky transition to peace in France in 1815, observing the risks of counter-effects from the victor's behaviour and lack of political vision.

*Schwerpunkt* must be viewed in relation to *Kulminationspunkt*, as part of the device of defence and attack. To strike a *Schwerpunkt* was to aim high, and consequently the enterprise was under the threat of reaching the culmination point. Here the possibility of changeover appeared to the defender to utilize the stagnation of the attacker; for example to switch onto the offensive if the correlation of forces was sufficient. It is important to recognize Clausewitz's terminology, such as - *Schwerpunkt*, *Kulminationspunkt*, *Umschwung* and *Wendepunkt* – in broader terms than just military and physical. These concepts clarifying the change of equilibrium are deeply moral and political too.

Clausewitz's observation of risks in using aggressive force was fundamental to his ideas: that the attack can defeat itself; but his recognition is hardly noticed in the literature. We like to discuss centre of gravity as intimate to success, but gloss over culmination as a matter of logistics. The use of aggressive force can cause opposite effects than the intended, thus strengthening rather than weakening the opponent politically to fight harder in response. That recognition underlies the concept of *Wechselwirkungen*, i.e. reciprocal actions and effects. Thus, *Kulminationspunkt* was the obverse of aggressiveness in trying to aim high and strike the *Schwerpunkt*, the run-dry of political-moral-military energy and change of equilibrium. This was of course not just a matter of logistics. Basically it was poor strategy, a failed gamble, a faulty calculation of purpose and means.

*§ 44. The contemporary framework of military thought between  
the tactical and the political should be reconsidered*

I remain with my initial standpoint, motivating this study. Contemporary doctrine overuses centre of gravity in high level military thinking and planning. Too much faith is invested in the possibility to strike success in single military terms. The concept of centre of gravity is attractive and appealing to anyone who has been trained in tactics, or in academic disciplines seeking positive explanations in a few perennial variables. By implication, contemporary doctrine tends to lose Clausewitz's broader dynamic framework to wage war.

Clausewitz did not offer any '*Wunderwaffe*', as some tend to present 'centre of gravity', though sometimes hard to find. On the contrary, he theorised war as reciprocal, to make clear that war surprises, and costs often more than expected; yet is sometimes inevitable and necessary. We may recall his observation about the reign of Louis XIV. That an era of uncontested power initiated speculation, the belief that one could predict the future, hence treat war as a military thing that could be confined and mastered by absolute patterns, to make it less costly.

Modern higher military education and doctrine favour operational art, but should pay more attention to strategy as a more apt and versatile form of thinking, not at least due to contemporary political and military conditions. Basically, modern '*Operationen*', the source of contemporary operational art, was strategy stereotyped. It was the conduct of war in military terms in the outer perimeters of tension according to the OODA-loop, to deal with unfavourable geo-strategic conditions. The historical record

strongly suggests that this way of military thinking is not a substitute for strategy and strategic thinking. To Clausewitz strategy was the merging of the tactical and the political, then not just in terms of policy. This simple but very tricky relation deserves attention in modern military education to be proficient in military command, to think strategy properly.

#### CLARITY AND REALISM

Clausewitz had the ambition to bring clarity and realism into strategic thinking. We may ask if he was successful in doing this. It is obvious that his result has been possible to employ in support of almost every, contradictory, standpoint on the conduct of war.<sup>1237</sup> The point of the present work has been to follow his train of thought to improve our understanding of his result and dispel some grave misunderstandings about its utility.

##### *§45. The fickle trinity reflect also the one-sided attraction of Clausewitz's readers*

As pointed out, war clarified as a 'fickle trinity' with three 'Anziehungspunkten', as points of intellectual attraction, still depicts the problem of thinking and theorising strategy quite well. Likewise the device depicts Clausewitz's readers quite well, hence their intellectual attraction to one cynosure. The generations following the *Kriegsphilosoph* decoded Clausewitz through the doctrine of the warlike element in positive terms. The generations following the 'modern Clausewitz' decoded him through the political element in positive terms of political primacy, policy and reason. Finally, the New War scholars locked onto the element of chance and the rise of new actors, thus 'the commander and his army' ready to use available means in small circumstances. Note that we must stay hovering between these points of intellectual attraction to understand Clausewitz properly, hence think strategy his way.

##### *§46. Individualism not schematism – the organic conception of war*

*Vom Kriege* promotes analytical individualism, following the ideas of historicism and hermeneutics, to think about war and strategy as particular cases fully dependent on context. The work offers a simple scheme, a structure of the art of war, from an ontological hypothesis of war to a suggestion of how to aim war and campaigns, paying attention to the simple but difficult relation of purpose and means.

Clausewitz was a firm enemy of schematism. It is easy to agree one should avoid this inclination, but military discourse and military thought systems, rooted in the tactical, have in all times displayed the inclination to schematize strategy. Proper strategic vision must be firmly rooted in the possible indeed, but also stay 'hovering' to keep a bird's perspective. Note that Clausewitz made an organic conception of war and *Politik*. Basically, how we think strategy, i.e. understand the warlike element, follows from our understanding of the element of *Politik*. So, if we like to think strategy according to military principles alone, this is can be seen as a product of how we understand the political.

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<sup>1237</sup> Compare for example: Wm J. Olsen, 'The Continuing Irrelevance of Clausewitz', *Small Wars Journal* (July 26, 2013) <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-continuing-irrelevance-of-clausewitz> accessed on 9 August 2013

*§47. Entrapment*

The present work points to the need to use fairly simply but well-thought out language to think and communicate strategy properly. The historical record strongly suggests that poor military ideas and faulty beliefs contribute to improper strategy, ultimately to defeat. Remember Clausewitz's conclusion that a failed enterprise could often be traced to improper balance of purpose and means in the plan of action. The concept of intellectual attraction points is useful to discuss the inclination in military thought to follow pet ideas.

For example the current use of centre of gravity leads astray from realistic expectations. Likewise we think of victory as a strategic concept, while to Clausewitz it was a tactical concept, a means among others. The pursuit of victory can make an effort to pass the culmination point. The present views are of course products of experience, hence the growth of military thought and theory intoxicated by the logic of the two world wars.

We may call this tendency to value certain ideas in a misleading way the entrapment of strategic thought. Likewise to entrap oneself in hostility, losing the strategic perspective is a fallacy clearly visible in the historical record. Modern military education should foster critical thinking to make the student of strategy aware of this problem, hence foster intellectual independence and courage to dare to be proactive; in conclusion, to understand and use a proper form of strategic thought that promotes clarity and sound realism.

*§48. Completeness and satisfaction*

The present work argues the 'undated note' should not be viewed as his final statement. It was most likely written before the *Nachricht*, in early 1827 or even in 1826. There is no final statement from Clausewitz about his work. So, whether or not *Vom Kriege* was a completed work is a question of perspective, depending on what archetype the reader follows:

1. Colonel Scherff considered *Vom Kriege* as a torso of ideas with the nature of an open pillared hall. The analysis mixed out-dated matters with brilliant lasting insights. Thus, those who followed '*Der Kriegsfilosoph*' and the doctrine of the warlike element, Book 3-7, found his work quite complete. It was however necessary to make practical modifications to reflect modern technical and political conditions, to make the doctrine of the warlike element fit in detail for modern war. When the gap in real details about warfare became too big, Clausewitz was regarded as mostly for professors or people ready for retirement. War in general was about the maximum effort to prevail. Political modification of the strategic aim of annihilation was a historical relic, deeply inappropriate for modern operations.

2. The reader following the 'modern Clausewitz' regards the work as a state of childhood and considers the first chapter asking 'What is war?' as his testament. The belief in the 'late insight' has fuelled the expectation that he would have rewritten the entire manuscript to pay more attention to policy and political reason. The professional reader, basically following the 'modern Clausewitz', sometimes also

adores the *Kriegsphilosoph*, hence the frank clarification of the warlike element as war itself.

3. The reader observing 'the unpractical and sceptical Prussian', thus following Jomini's point of view has difficulties to make sense of Clausewitz's ideas. What is the text good for? It does not provide any guidance on how to do things. *Vom Kriege* is a relic without proper method and scientific clarity. In addition, a work of philosophy, metaphysics, is not a work of proper modern scientific standard. This type of reader is not interested in the question of completeness.

4. The reader following 'the outdated Clausewitz' may be interested in his ideas, but reads the work basically as a normative account. This reader perceives consistent lack of moral, technological and military standard in relation to the present world. On principle the work is regarded as incomplete due to this theoretical expectation and perspective.

The present work argues that *Vom Kriege* should be read as a critical philosophy of strategy, the doctrine of warlike element examined, the coherence of which was saved by the element of *Politik*. Clausewitz's work clarifies, perhaps better than anyone else's, fundamental theoretical problems of strategic thought as well as scientific preconditions for strategic studies. Following the 'theoretical Clausewitz' the work is in fact sufficiently complete. Clausewitz probably managed, more or less, to do the work he intended, at least in outline. His work included continual problem-solving and the level of his final satisfaction can of course not be determined.

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This concludes the following of Clausewitz's train of thought to envision strategy. We should not regard the Prussian as too complicated. He does not offer a manual of strategy, but a frank vehicle for reflection. We should attend to his intellectual clarity and quest for theoretical realism: a theoretical result that stands up almost 200 years later, to be pondered and contested. We should remember that theory was never a substitute for judgement in action. Perhaps a future work may take on the problem of developing Clausewitz's dynamic form of thinking strategy to understand contemporary conditions even better.

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